

# Manawatu Gorge Tracks

## Manawatu Gorge Scenic Reserve



### Manawatu Gorge

It is hard to imagine that such a beautiful and accessible piece of forest is less than 20 minutes drive from Palmerston North city. If you haven't walked these tracks before, then it is a "must do", particularly for those who live in the Manawatu.

The gorge is unusual because it is one of the few places in New Zealand where the river crosses a mountain range. The Manawatu River was created long before the mountain ranges were born. As the land rose, the river continued to cut its way through the mountains creating the gorge. To the north is the Ruahine Range and to the south lie the Tararuas.

### Location

The Manawatu Gorge tracks are located approximately 12 km east of Palmerston North adjacent to State Highway 3. Access to the Manawatu Gorge track from the west (Ashhurst end) is from the carpark on the left side of the road immediately before the gorge entrance.

From the east (Woodville end) the track entrance is located on the Ballance Gorge Road just across the Ballance Bridge. The Upper Gorge Bridge and Manawatu Gorge Loop tracks are accessed from this end.

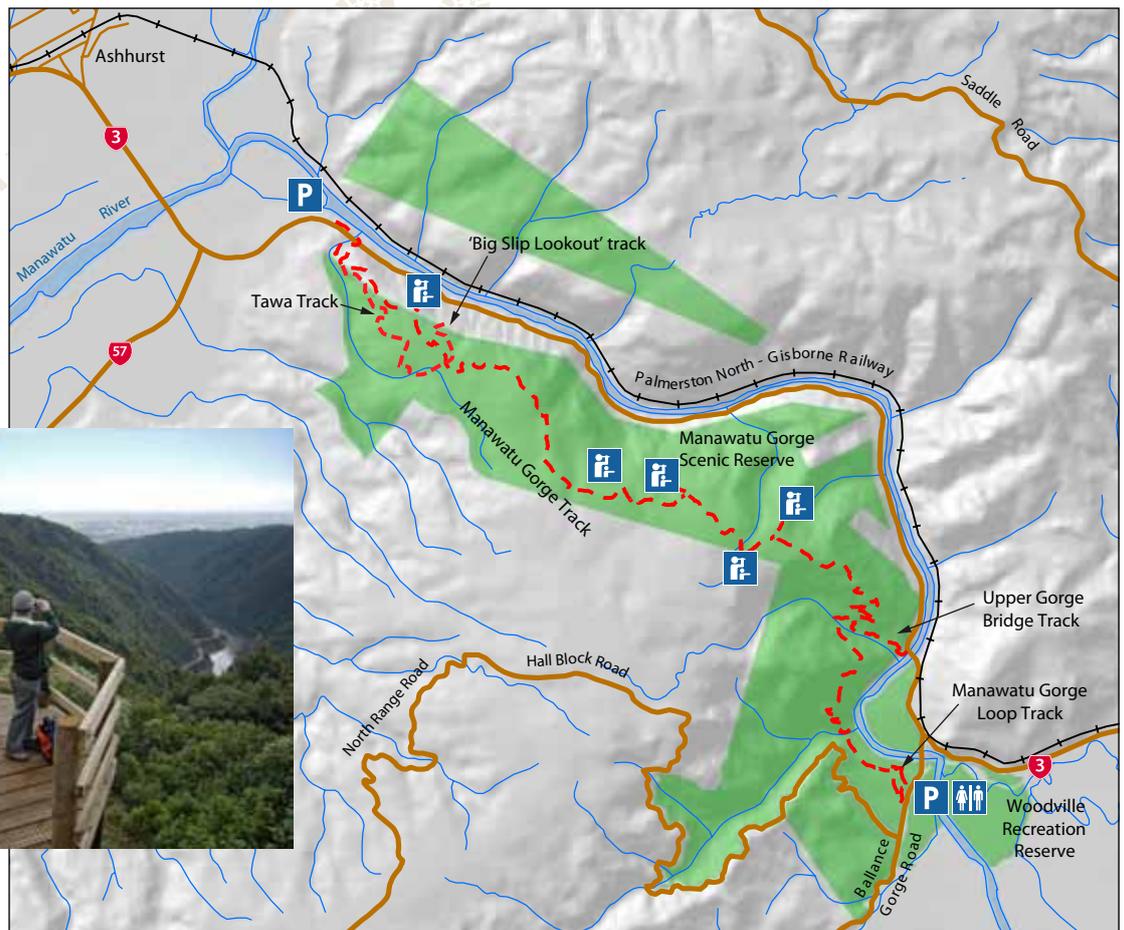


**NEW ZEALAND  
environmental  
CARE CODE**

- Protect plants and animals
  - Remove rubbish
  - Keep streams and lakes clean
  - Keep to the track
  - Consider others
  - Respect our cultural heritage
  - Enjoy your visit
- Toitu te whenua  
(Leave the land undisturbed)*

**DOC HOTline  
0800 362 468**

Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111



Viewing platform.  
Photo: DOC.

## Manawatu Gorge Track

### Walking Track, 3–5 hours one way.

Please note that the Manawatu Gorge Track is NOT A LOOP TRACK.

If you are using two cars, then park one at the Woodville end and leave the other in the carpark at the Ashhurst end. It only takes about 10 minutes extra driving to sort out the cars. If you choose to walk for an hour, turn around and come out the same way, it is recommended that you start from the Ashhurst (western) end.

### Suitability

This 10 km walk is very achievable for people of average fitness. The well-formed metal track follows a steady gradient. Walking shoes or boots are recommended.

### Things to see

From the Ashhurst end, the short walk up the stream at the start of the track is a lovely way to immerse yourself in the forest experience. The sound of cascading water drowns out the sound of traffic and makes the busy gorge feel a lot further away than it is.

The vegetation type is mainly tawa and podocarp forest but also has a significant number of broadleaved trees. What makes this piece of forest so unusual is the predominance of the giant maidenhair fern. This fern is found only in the Manawatu in New Zealand. Nikau palms are here in abundance giving a tropical touch to the track.

On a fine day, the various viewpoints along the track are impressive, and the latest additions to the landscape, the wind turbines, are an interesting feature as well.

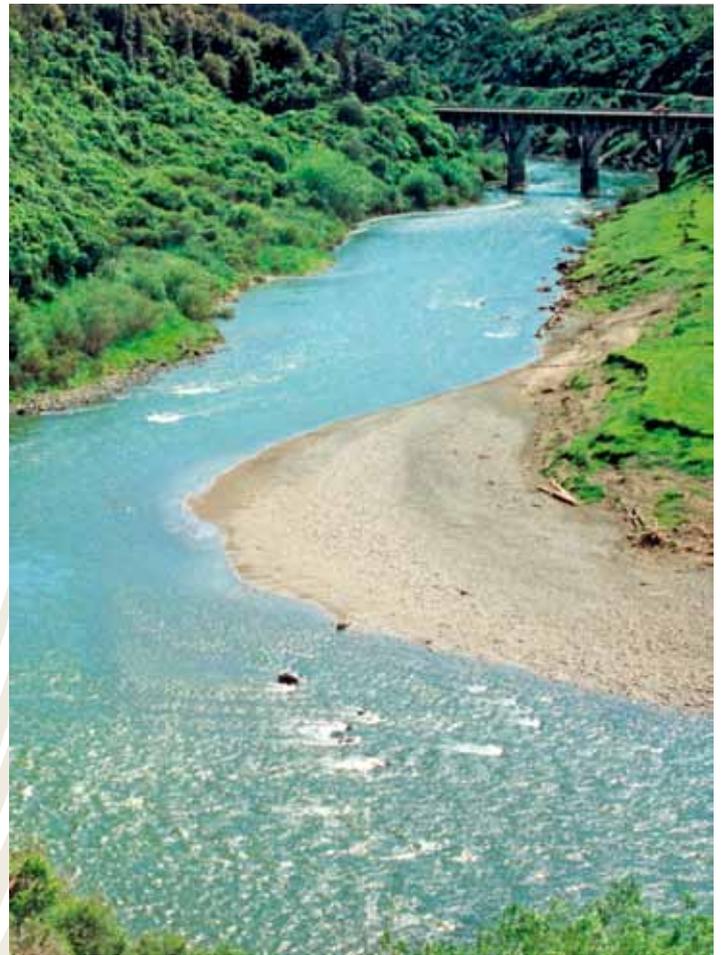


Wind turbines. Photo: John Spence.

## Tawa Track loop

### Walking Track, 1–2 hours

Starting from the Ashhurst end, the track gives an alternative shorter walk to that of the Manawatu Gorge Track. This 4 km walk includes Tom's Lookout" offering views over Palmerston North and Ashhurst, and joins up with a track created by the New Zealand Transport Agency that provides a lookout over a massive slip that closed the gorge road for over a year.



Manawatu River from track. Photo: DOC.

## Upper Gorge Bridge Track

### Walking Track, 1½–2 hours one way

Please note that the Upper Gorge Bridge Track is NOT A LOOP TRACK.

Starting from the Woodville end, the track gives an alternative shorter walk to that of the Manawatu Gorge Track. This track finishes back down on State Highway 3 near the gorge bridge, so it is not recommended for young families. There is no footpath back to the carpark along State Highway 3, so you are advised to make transport arrangements.

## Manawatu Gorge Loop Track

### Loop Track, 15–30 minutes

If your time is limited, you have a very young family who can't manage a long walk, there is a short loop track (suitable for push-chairs) located at the Woodville end of the Manawatu Gorge.

The loop track has no steps. It is an easy meander through beautiful native bush. This is a very special place, as there are signs here made by children, for children. The "Nature through the eyes of a child" interpretation signs provide unique insight for parents into the way children see the natural world around them. College Street pupils from Palmerston North, aged 8–10 years, researched and designed the signs as part of their environmental unit at school in 2005.