



## West Harper Hut to Lagoon Saddle Hut

Time: 2–3 hr one way

From West Harper Hut, the track bypasses a small gorge to reach river flats, which are then followed to the confluence of Long Creek and Harper River. Follow the markers up the Harper riverbed for approximately 500 m before climbing steadily on a formed track on the true left to Lagoon Saddle shelter. Lagoon Saddle Hut is located just across the river and has two bunks and mattresses. There is avalanche risk in heavy snow conditions on this section.



## Lagoon Saddle Hut to Bealey Hut and SH73

Time: 2–3 hr one way

From Lagoon Saddle Hut, the track gradually climbs through patches of beech forest above the tarns on Lagoon Saddle. It is marked by poles and markers.

Once on the northern face of Mount Bruce, the track descends through tussock and gives views of the snow-capped peaks of Arthur's Pass National Park and the braided Waimakariri River.

The track descends through beech and exotic forest to Bealey Hut (six bunks). A further 5 min walk from the hut takes you to the car park by Cora Lynn Station, and another 2 min to SH73.

If you are walking this route in reverse, take Cora Lynn Road to the Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge and Cora Lynn Station and enter through the gate signposted Cass – Lagoon Track. Note that times may be longer on the uphill sections of the track when walking in this direction.



## Huts

Hamilton Hut needs to be booked in advance – visit [doc.govt.nz/hut-bookings](https://doc.govt.nz/hut-bookings).

All other huts in this area operate on a first come, first served basis. Purchase hut tickets before you leave from any Department of Conservation visitor centre, selected isites and outdoor stores, or visit [doc.govt.nz/backcountry-hut-pass](https://doc.govt.nz/backcountry-hut-pass).

### Further information:

#### Arthur's Pass National Park Visitor Centre

104 West Coast Road, Arthur's Pass 7654  
8.30 am – 4.30 pm daily

PHONE: 03 318 9211

EMAIL: [arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)

[doc.govt.nz](https://doc.govt.nz)

## 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 NZ clean

Use toilets where provided. Take all rubbish with you.



### Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



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Cover photo: Looking down the Harper valley from Lagoon Saddle.  
Photo: Department of Conservation

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit [doc.govt.nz](https://doc.govt.nz).

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Department of Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

# Cass-Lagoon Saddle Track route guide

Craigieburn Forest Park



## Summary



**Time:** 2–3 day loop (shuttle required).

**Grade:** Advanced tramping track and expert route.

**Best season:** Summer, autumn and spring.

**Experience:** Unformed track suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills (remote area), navigation, river crossing and survival skills and experience. River crossing skills essential.

**Required maps:** NZTopo50: Otira BV20, Cass BV21, Lake Coleridge BW20.

**Hazards:** Avalanche, flooded rivers.

**Note:** ‘True left’ and ‘true right’ refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

**Safety:** This route guide must be read in conjunction with *Tramping in Arthur’s Pass National Park*, a free brochure with important safety information, and New Zealand’s Land Safety Code. Before setting out, check the latest track conditions and avalanche advisory with the Arthur’s Pass Visitor Centre.

## A comfortably challenging weekend tramp

This track is in the mountains east of the Main Divide. It crosses riverbeds and rivers, follows forest tracks, and crosses two saddles. For a challenging weekend tramp, stop midway at Hamilton Hut (a 20-bunk hut), or take 3–4 days by staying in some of the other basic huts along the route.

The track is not marked all the way, so ensure that you take a topographical map with you. Most trampers prefer to begin the track from the Cass Saddle end, as this avoids the steepest ascents. Because of the potentially high avalanche danger on the Cass Saddle, and the frequency of winter snowfalls, this route is best attempted from early to late summer. Not all rivers and streams are bridged, so they may be impassable after heavy rainfall.

Cora Lynn to Hamilton Hut is part of Te Araroa Trail and is consequently busier in summer.

## Getting there

Both track entrances are alongside State Highway 73 (SH73) between Christchurch and Arthur’s Pass. A return shuttle service runs daily along SH73 between Greymouth and Christchurch. The Cass River end of the track starts from the signposted car park at the east end of the Cass Road bridge, opposite

Cass settlement. This car park is frequently targeted by vandals and thieves. Alternatively, you can park at the marked car park at Cass settlement and walk 1 km along the gravel road to the start of the track on SH73.

To reach the western end of the track, turn off SH73 about 14 km east of Arthur’s Pass village, onto Cora Lynn Road. There is a car park here for trampers through the signposted gate.

## Cass-Lagoon Saddle Track



### Cass car park to Cass Saddle Hut

**Time:** 4 hr one way

From the signposted car park at the east end of the Cass Road bridge, follow the vehicle track until it meets Cass River.

Follow the riverbed upstream, keeping to the true right bank as much as possible. You will need to cross the river several times. The track climbs into the forest at a marked point just below the junction with Long Valley Stream. It is easy to miss this point if you are on the wrong side of Cass River so stay on the true right. Cross the river again via a bridge. The track then climbs for another 20–30 min before crossing the river again. Cass Saddle Hut is reached soon after you have crossed to the true right bank. It has three bunks and a wood-burning stove. Water can be obtained from a small stream just to the southeast of the hut.



### Cass Saddle Hut to Hamilton Hut

**Time:** 2 hr 30 min one way

The tussock basin above Cass Saddle Hut is reached shortly after leaving the hut, and the poled route climbs gradually to the saddle. Hamilton Hut can be seen in the distance down the valley. Traverse left for 200 m to the start of the cut track.



This area is subject to avalanche activity during the winter. During heavy snow conditions, we advise visitors not to travel this route unless sufficiently equipped and experienced to assess the conditions and choose a safe path through avalanche terrain. Heavy snow can significantly slow travel speeds.

The track drops steeply from the saddle, and then more gently through the bush terraces, joining Hamilton Creek 15 min from Hamilton Hut. The 20-bunk hut has a wood-burning stove and a radio linked to Arthur’s Pass Visitor Centre. Calls can be made during office hours to obtain weather forecasts.



## Side trip: The Pinnacles

**Time:** 4–6 hr return

In the lower Harper valley, erosion has formed an interesting geological feature that makes a worthwhile side trip from Hamilton Hut.

The Pinnacles were made about 3–7 million years ago from geologically young rock consisting of alluvial sands and gravels. Erosion, caused by rainwater washing away the exposed soil, has formed the pinnacle shapes. Pebbles or small stones may be seen on the tops of the pinnacles, temporarily protecting them from erosion. Nearby, Harper River has exposed older rocks containing marine fossils.

The route to The Pinnacles is down Harper River from Hamilton Creek, following Te Araroa Trail, initially on a walking track, then a four-wheel drive (4WD) track. Harper River needs to be crossed several times – crossings should not be attempted if the river is high. The Pinnacles are set back a short way on the true right bank.

The 4WD track crosses private farmland; please do not disturb any stock.



## Hamilton Hut to West Harper Hut

**Time:** 2 hr 30 min one way

The route crosses Hamilton Creek at the footbridge 10 min downstream from Hamilton Hut and leads to a swing bridge across Harper River, a short distance above its confluence with Hamilton Creek.

After crossing the swing bridge, the route continues upstream on the true right of the river to West Harper Hut. In fine weather and suitable conditions, the riverbed offers an easy alternative with several fine swimming holes along the way. West Harper Hut (built in the 1950s) has five canvas bunks, a fireplace and a dirt floor.



## Side trip: Mirror Tarn

**Time:** 20 min return

A side trip can be made to Mirror Tarn while en route to West Harper Hut. About 20 m beyond the Hamilton Creek bridge is the sign to Mirror Tarn. Follow the marked track steeply uphill for about 10 min to reach the tarn.