

Avalanche Peak to Crow Hut route guide

Arthur's Pass National Park



Crow Hut to Klondyke Corner

Time: 4 hr one way

From Crow Hut, follow Crow River down on the true right bank. The route alternates between easy riverbank travel and sections of marked track in the bush, where the river runs close to the bank. About 15 min downstream from the hut is an active rockfall area. Cross it quickly, but with appropriate caution.

Cross Crow River where it opens out before joining Waimakariri River. Then cut the corner on a marked track through a flat tongue of beech forest to the grassy Waimakariri flats.

If Crow River is not easily crossed, travel further downstream to where it joins Waimakariri River. There is no track this way, but crossing may be possible where the river widens.

From Crow River, the terrain changes between large grassy flats and shingle riverbed. Because Waimakariri River flows against steep bluffs, you must cross the river several times to reach the end of the road at Klondyke Corner. The second lower river crossing may present some difficulty under some conditions. In these circumstances, it is possible to traverse the huge scrub-covered fan (Turkey Flat) opposite the Crow confluence to join the marked track that climbs above the river and descends to the road bridge at Bealey on SH73.



If Waimakariri River is high or in flood, you must find a safe place to wait for river levels to drop.



Huts

Crow Hut operates 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://www.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

[doc.govt.nz](https://www.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: The scree slide into the Crow valley.

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://www.doc.govt.nz).

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Summary



Time: 2 days (shuttle required).

Grade: Expert route (unmarked).

Best season: Midsummer to late autumn.

Experience: Unformed route suitable only for people with high-level backcountry (remote area), navigation, river crossing and survival skills and experience. Complete self-sufficiency required. River crossing skills essential.

Required maps: NZTopo50: Otira BV20.

Hazards: Flooded rivers, rockfalls, changeable weather, avalanches and areas of steep ice.

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 National Park Visitor Centre.

A challenging two-day route

This route makes a good weekend trip, all against a backdrop of some of the best features of Arthur's Pass National Park – glaciers, mountain peaks and ice-fed rivers. Crow Hut is at the bush edge in an alpine meadow.

This route is extremely steep in places and exposed to the weather. The route is not continuously marked so you need to be able to find your own way.

From Crow Hut to Klondyke Corner on State Highway 73 (SH73) is a 4 hr tramp following the Crow and Waimakariri Rivers.

Getting there

The trip starts from Arthur's Pass village on SH73, 150 km from Christchurch. It finishes at Klondyke Corner, 8 km south of Arthur's Pass village. You can leave your car here or catch a shuttle bus.



Do not attempt the route in poor visibility or high winds. In winter and spring (July to November) the route over Avalanche Peak is avalanche prone. Do not travel this route during heavy snow conditions.

Arthur's Pass village to Crow Hut Arthur's Pass village to Avalanche Peak

Time: 3–4 hr one way

For more information on the route to Avalanche Peak, visit doc.govt.nz/avalanche-peak-route.

Two tracks head to Avalanche Peak: Avalanche Peak Track is steeper and more direct; Scotts Track climbs more gradually, has better views and is easier on the knees. Both tracks are marked to the summit.

Avalanche Peak to Crow Hut

Time: 2–3 hr one way

Avalanche Peak summit to scree slope

Time: 1 hr one way

The ridgeline from Avalanche Peak summit is narrow and rocky so the unmarked route often sidles below the ridge. The route to the main ridge behind Avalanche Peak starts in the opposite direction from what you would expect. From the summit, drop down the south side of Avalanche Peak onto the top of a shingle scree.

Note: As you walk up from the village, south is on your left; the large, glaciated peak, Mount Rolleston, is to the north.

From the shingle scree, head northwest under the main Rolleston ridge. From the saddle, sidle on the eastern (village) side of the ridge, down to the main ridge towards Mount Rolleston. Continue along this ridge for about 30 min until you reach a marked point indicating the descent point into the Crow valley.



If you are doing this trip in reverse, do not be tempted to drop into the upper basins of McGrath Creek to avoid climbing over Avalanche Peak. The basins end in bluffs (rounded cliffs) so are not a shortcut.

Scree slope to Crow Hut

Time: 1 hr 30 min one way

The route leaves the ridge, and a scree slope takes you all the way to Crow River.



It is vital to find the right descent into Crow River. Do not attempt to descend to Crow River before the marked point because earlier screes finish in bluffs.

There are four features to check that you are at the right place:

1. The point is marked by stakes and a rock cairn.
2. You can see the full length of the scree, from the ridge to the Crow valley.
3. The full drop of Devils Punchbowl Falls is visible on the opposite slopes.
4. Just after the correct place to descend, the ridge you are on rises more steeply towards Mount Rolleston.

This scree provides a good, bluff-free descent, but is avalanche prone in heavy snow. Take care not to dislodge loose rock onto people below you. **Beware of rockfall.**

Towards the bottom, this long scree narrows before fanning out. From here, you can see Crow Hut on the true right bank of Crow River.

Follow the riverbed downstream for 20 min to the hut. If the river is high, look for a crossing as far above the hut as possible. The 10-bunk hut stands in a clearing on a terrace at the bush edge. The Crow face of Rolleston at the head of the valley is a popular winter climbing route.

The name Crow was inspired by the sighting of a South Island kōkako (orange-wattled crow) during an 1865 exploration of the area. Last seen in the park in the 1930s, the South Island kōkako is probably extinct.

