

# Harper Pass Route guide

Arthur's Pass National Park to  
Lake Sumner Forest Park



## Hope Kiwi Lodge to Lewis Pass Highway

**Time: 5–6 hr one way**

Follow the poled route from Hope Kiwi Lodge along the forest edge to the Hope River swing bridge, about 30 min from the hut. For 1 hr or so below the swing bridge, the track wanders down the broad grassy flats until eroded riverbanks mean a return to the forest. The third time the track leaves the river it climbs the bank to Hope Halfway Hut (note the fireplace has been removed).

After Hope Halfway Hut, the track keeps to the beech forest for 2–3 hr on terraces high above the riverbed. At the forest edge, a vehicle track descends through mānuka and tussock to the swing bridge over the Boyle River gorge. Amuri Area School Outdoor Education Centre is located here, and the shelter and car park is 5 min down the shingle road at Windy Point, just off Lewis Pass Highway.



### Huts

Hope Kiwi Lodge needs to be booked in advance – visit [doc.govt.nz/hut-bookings](http://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 (DOC) visitor centre, selected isites and outdoor stores, or visit [doc.govt.nz/backcountry-hut-pass](http://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](http://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.



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Cover photo: Harper Pass looking into the Taramakau valley.

*Photo: Steve Nairn*

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

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## Summary



**Time:** 4-5 days (shuttle required).

**Grade:** Advanced tramping track.

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

**Experience:** Mostly unformed track suitable for people with moderate to high fitness who have backcountry (remote area) and river-crossing skills.

**Required maps:** NZTopo50: Moana BU20, Haupiri BU21, Lake Sumner BU22, Boyle BU23.

**Hazards:** Flooded rivers, steep drop-offs.

**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.

## Follow the historic route from west to east

This guide describes the Harper Pass Route from west to east. River-crossing skills are essential. Harper Pass was the main pathway to and from the West Coast for Māori when trading pounamu (greenstone). It continued to be an important route during the gold rush in 1864-65. It is now part of Te Araroa Trail, so can be very busy in summer.

It is best to start the trip from the west, as fine weather is required when crossing the Ōtira, Otehae and Taramakau Rivers. These rivers can rise quickly during rain, and you are advised not to attempt any river crossings while river levels are high. The eastern side is easier because all major rivers are bridged, and good forest tracks make tramping possible, even in unpleasant conditions.

## Getting there

This trip starts at Aickens car park beside State Highway 73, 5 km west of Ōtira township. To access the Taramakau valley, you need to cross the Ōtira River. *If the Ōtira River is not easy to cross, postpone your tramp until another day as crossing the Otehae and Taramakau Rivers further upstream will be impossible.*

The trip finishes at the shelter and car park at Windy Point, just off Lewis Pass Highway on State Highway 7.

## Aickens car park to Kiwi Hut to Locke Stream Hut

**Time:** 6 hr one way

*Parties travelling from the east and finding themselves stuck on the far side of the Ōtira River can use an emergency flood track, adding 2 hr to the tramp. This marked route starts upstream and takes you to the Morrison footbridge at the confluence of the Ōtira and Deception Rivers. In extreme weather conditions, this route can also be cut off by flooded sections. Do not use the emergency flood track to start your tramp as there are many river crossings further up the Taramakau valley.*

If the Ōtira River is safe to cross, start from the Aickens car park, cross the stile and follow the fenceline to the river. After crossing the Ōtira, make for the end of the band of tall trees immediately opposite (marked by an orange triangle).

A track leads through scrub and gorse to grassy flats. Continue walking along these grassy flats past Pfeifer Creek and the signposted turn-off to Lake Kaurapataka. Stay on the true left bank and cross the Otehae River and then, further upstream, cross the Taramakau River to its true right at the safest place to cross.

Continue along the true right for about a kilometre above the Otehae River where a sign will indicate the short side-track to Kiwi Hut (8 bunks).

Keep to the true right as you travel upstream from Kiwi Hut. Towards Locke Creek, the riverbed begins to narrow and eroded banks on the true right become steeper. Cross to the true left just downstream of the Taramakau River/Locke Creek confluence and continue over Locke Creek where you will locate a short track leading through the forest to Locke Stream Hut (18 bunks).

## Locke Stream Hut to Hurunui No 3 Hut

**Time:** 6-7 hr one way

Above Locke Stream Hut, the track travels along the true left, at times in the forest and at times along the riverbed. Beware there is an active slip about 45 min upstream of the hut on the true left. You may need to cross the river to get around it. The swing bridge is a further 15 min on. Cross the bridge to the true right of the river, where again the track travels through forest and riverbed.

Eventually the track leaves the river and begins to climb towards Harper Pass. The track is steep and rough in places. As forest gives way to alpine scrub and tussock, the gradient eases. A sign marking the summit of the pass is reached in 3 hr.

The track drops fairly quickly on the eastern side of the pass into the headwaters of the Hurunui River. After 30 min you will reach the Harper Pass Bivvy (2 bunks), which is attractively sited in a grove of mānau/ribbonwood above the stream on the true right.

Below Harper Pass Bivvy, walking becomes a lot easier as the track drops down through tawhai/beech forest. As the valley opens, the track emerges onto river flats, with Camerons Hut standing out from the edge of the forest. Note that from Harper Pass Bivvy to Camerons Hut is 2 hr and Camerons Hut no longer has bunks.

Cameron Stream has an emergency walk-wire 100 m up from the Hurunui riverbed. From here, the track returns to the forest and keeps just within the fringes until it emerges again on river flats at Hurunui No 3 Hut (16 bunks).

## Hurunui No 3 Hut to Hurunui Hut

**Time:** 4 hr one way

Below Hurunui No 3 Hut, the track follows easy grassy flats across the valley floor. The track keeps to the true right, at times on the flats or in the forest. The forest sections sidle up and down the hillside to bypass places where the river cuts in against the bank.

The highlight of this part of the journey is the hot spring about 2 hr walk from Hurunui No 3 Hut. This spring flows from the rock about 30 m above the bed of the Hurunui River and sends sulphurous waters down an open scar in the forest. The track crosses the scar below the spring. A small pool has been formed at the spring. Keep an eye out for the turn-off as it is easy to miss.

From the hot spring, the track returns to river flats, then sidles up through mānuka forest to Hurunui Hut (15 bunks), sited well up the hillside.

## Hurunui Hut to Hope Kiwi Lodge

**Time:** 6 hr one way

From Hurunui Hut, the track descends to the swing bridge across the Hurunui River.

Cross the bridge and take the four-wheel drive (4WD) track to the forest edge on the far side of the Matagouri Flat. Continue along the forest edge to where the track heads into forest at the headwaters of Lake Sumner. After a short return to grassy flats, the track enters the forest again and begins to climb easily to Three Mile Stream.

After crossing Three Mile Stream, the track climbs steadily to Kiwi Saddle through forest dominated by tall tawhairaunui/red beech. Just before the summit, there is a short 2 min side track to a lookout across the lake, which is well worth a photo stop.

From the saddle, descend to the swampy grasslands of Kiwi valley. Follow the track on your left to avoid the bogs and then pick up a 4WD track on the true right of the Kiwi River across the open grasslands to Hope Kiwi Lodge (bookable, 20 bunks).