

Edwards – Hawdon valleys via Tarn Col route guide

Arthur's Pass National Park



Walker Pass to Hawdon Hut

Time: 2–3 hours

Walk to the creek draining the tarn on the pass and follow it down through boulders and scrub. A helpful track zigzags the creek. Marker poles starting in the creek show where to leave it towards the bush track. The poles lead you up past a rocky knoll. From here, the track descends through the bush past Twin Falls Stream to the Hawdon River. It is only 5 minutes from the Hawdon River to Hawdon Hut.

The original Hawdon Hut burnt down in 2005 and the replacement hut, built in 2007, is on the flats above Discovery Stream, about 15 minutes upstream from the original location. Hawdon Hut (serviced, 20 bunks) has a radio that is monitored by the Arthur's Pass National Park Visitor Centre from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm, 7 days a week.



Hawdon Hut to Hawdon Shelter

Time: 3 hours one way

Follow the Hawdon Hut Track on the true right of the Hawdon River until just above the point where East Hawdon Stream joins the main Hawdon River. If the water levels are low, cross the main river here and then cross East Hawdon Stream. Follow the open grassy flats on the true left to a line of cliffs. Recross the Hawdon River and follow it down the bush edge where a last crossing of the river is needed to reach the Hawdon Shelter at the road end.

If the rivers are in flood, stay put at the hut until they drop to a safe level.

Note: Department of Conservation (DOC) staff use four-wheel motorbikes to access the valley in their work to protect the endangered kākāriki karaka / orange-fronted parakeet. Coloured markers and tape in the valley mark access points for DOC staff. **Do not follow these markers** – follow only the standard orange track markers.



Huts

The huts in this area need to be booked in advance – visit doc.govt.nz/hut-bookings.

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

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: Taruahuna Pass looking to Tarn Col.

Photo: Jamin Barkley

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit doc.govt.nz.

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For safety hazards and
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**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Summary



Time: 2–3 days (shuttle required).

Grade: Advanced tramping track and expert route.

Best season: Summer and autumn. Extreme avalanche danger in winter and spring.

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

Required maps: NZTopo50: BV20 Otira, BV21 Cass.

Hazards: Avalanches, flooded rivers, rockfalls and 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 National Park Visitor Centre.

Experience the best of the park’s stunning alpine landscapes

This interesting tramp and route takes you through spectacular rockfalls, past mountain tarns and over two alpine passes. The picturesque hanging valley at Walker Pass is a fitting reward and worth every step over Taruahuna Pass and the steep climb up to Tarn Col.

Most of the route is partially marked. Between Edwards Hut and Taruahuna Pass, follow a path up the valley hidden under the tussocks and marked with spread-out poles.

Getting there

The Edwards valley end of the track starts beside State Highway 73 (SH73), about 5 kilometres south of Arthur’s Pass village, close to Greyneys Shelter. This area can be subject to thefts from vehicles. The Hawdon Hut Track is accessed via Mount White Road, which turns off SH73 about 24 kilometres east of Arthur’s Pass village. Park at Hawdon Shelter or Hawdon Shelter Campsite.



The rivers in this area are not bridged, so river crossing skills and experience are essential. Times are likely to be slower travelling from Hawdon Hut west to Tarn Col than travelling west to east. We recommend west to east, as navigation is easier.



SH73 to Edwards Hut

Time: 4–6 hours one way

Head across the road through the underpass under the railway tracks to join a four-wheel drive track to the Bealey River. Cross the river just above its confluence with the Mingha River. If the river is not easy to cross here, you will have problems further on, so save the trip for another day.

Look for the sign on the Mingha River flats indicating the turn-off to the Edwards valley. A large orange marker on the true left bank marks the start of a 20-minute track to bypass the lower Edwards gorge. This track starts just below the confluence of the Mingha and Edwards Rivers.

When the track emerges on to the riverbed, travel upstream on the true left for 1 hour, climbing the bank once or twice when necessary. Cross the Edwards River East Branch (difficult when high) above where it joins the main river and pick up the marked track 100 metres up the East Branch on the opposite bank. The track rises and falls several times avoiding steep side gullies and gives the odd glimpse of waterfalls as it follows the Edwards River canyon.



There are large drop-offs and steep sections on this part of the track. Take extreme care.

The track leads to a large upland valley, finally emerging among tussocks on the upper river flats (take care as it is easy to lose your way in the maze of tussocks). The track then heads back into the forest for a short section before emerging on the river flats with a clear view to Edwards Hut. The total time from the road is 4–6 hours, with the junction with the East Branch being a little under halfway.

The radio at Edwards Hut (serviced, 16 bunks) is monitored by Arthur’s Pass National Park Visitor Centre from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm, 7 days a week. Please read the instructions carefully. There is a log burner in the hut for heating but you will need your own cooker and utensils.



Edwards Hut to Hawdon Hut

Time: 6–9 hours one way

Note: The wide time range is due to variation in the time trampers take to complete the steep ascent of Tarn Col. Visibility on Tarn Col and Walker Pass can also slow progress.

Edwards Hut to Taruahuna Pass

Time: 2 hours

From Edwards Hut, continue upstream along the true left bank over tussock flats or in the riverbed to the summit of Taruahuna Pass.

Travel is slow but on easy gradients and is helped at times by well-trodden paths under the tussock marked with poles. The pass itself is a huge pile of mountain debris, the result of a landslide from Falling Mountain triggered by a large earthquake in 1929.



This area is subject to avalanche activity during the winter. Do not travel this route during heavy snow conditions.

Taruahuna Pass to Walker Pass

Time: 2–4 hours

From the rocky debris on the western side of Taruahuna Pass, the route turns abruptly right and goes extremely steeply up to Tarn Col. There are no poles across the rock pile but there is the odd rock cairn. Look for the sign that points to Tarn Col on the western side of Taruahuna Pass. The best route up is to climb beside the creek that drops down from the lowest point on the col. Be careful on the steep, slippery snow tussock. The ascent is marked with marker poles, but they can be hard to spot when climbing the steep terrain.



When Tarn Col is covered in snow, the route is difficult and an ice axe and crampons will be needed. If the creek bed is icy, climb to the rocky point on the ridge to the right (the true left of the creek) and then to the col. The climb takes about 45 minutes. Poor visibility will complicate route finding, and if you have been climbing for more than 45 minutes, it is likely you have chosen the wrong place and are climbing Fallen Mountain instead.

Go around the tarn and follow the marker poles that drop immediately into the bed of the creek draining the tarn. Avoid the temptation to stay on the flat tussockland on the true left, as you will end up in bluffs.

In late spring/early summer, there can be a suspended layer of ice above the creek that runs from Tarn Col to the Otehake River East Branch. We strongly recommend that trampers do not walk on the ice, as it can easily break.

Travel down the creek until it joins the larger Otehake River East Branch (the first main stream coming down from the right) and then turn south. It is easy to go the wrong way from here, so check your map and compass to make sure you are going upstream and south. Be careful crossing this stream, and others, on your way to Hawdon Hut, as the tracks are extremely slippery.

Travel up the riverbed for about 20 minutes. Climb through scrub to the low saddle on the left (true right). This is Walker Pass. A well-trodden track through the scrub begins at a cairn in the riverbed, 100 metres below a low cliff where the river swings southwest towards Amber Col.