Your safety is your responsibility

Oteake is subject to flooding, snowfall events and weather extremes. Take clothing for all weather. Topographical maps are essential for all backcountry trips.

**Cell phone coverage** is not reliable in the park. Satellite phones, mountain radios and personal locator beacons increase personal safety.

**River crossing:** Be aware of weather conditions in the catchment headwaters. Do not attempt to cross swollen rivers or streams. Check fords before entry.

**Avalanches:** Avalanches can occur from May to November. See the “Be Avalanche Alert” page on the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz.

**Fire:** Fire restrictions apply to all conservation land. Check with local information centres or DOC offices for the current fire status.

*Before your trip, ensure you:*
- Visit your local DOC office or the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz to see all huts and tracks are open
- Check the weather forecast
- Leave your intentions with someone or register on www.adventuresmart.org.nz

**Check, Clean, Dry**
Stop the spread of didymo and other aquatic pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between waterways.

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History

Kāi Tahu believe that Oteake, ‘place of the ake’, is named for the ake ake: Olearia avicenniaefolia, a conspicuous shrub daisy found in the park. Oteake is also the indigenous name for both the Kye Burn and a stream on the other side of the range. Oteake was important to tangata whenua from coastal Otago kāika/settlements as mahika kai—places where food was obtained. Weka were hunted and plants gathered. Stone quarries in the upper Manuherikia are further evidence of iwi activity. Oteake’s European history began when pastoral leases were issued throughout the South Island’s high country in the 1850s, creating large lease holdings such as Hawkdun, Omarama, Otekaike and Morven Hill stations. Over time they were subdivided, and more recently, through tenure review and property purchase, have become Oteake Conservation Park. The park shows evidence of gold mining with a network of water races, prospecting pits, hut sites and alluvial mining sluicings. Buster Diggings, a spectacular sculptural landform created by alluvial gold mining, was once New Zealand’s highest altitude goldfield at 1200 m.

Exploration and activity

Oteake highlights

• 4WD along the tops via Mt Buster Rd to Johnstones Creek Track and experience the landscape of changing light.
• Travel in your 4WD up backcountry tracks linking St Bathans with Omarama.
• Stay overnight in Ida Railway, a high-country mustering hut.
• Walk the Little Kye Burn, a track that takes you through unique native shrubland with views of waterfalls.
• Explore Buster Diggings, spectacular quartz gravel sculptures created by gold mining.
• Mountain bike the Ida Water Race Track with your family.

Plants and animals

Oteake’s landscape comprises rounded tussock-covered hills, grey shrubland on the valley floors, and alpine herb fields and fell fields in the hilltops. The park is where Otago species reach their northern limits and Canterbury species reach their southern limits. The park protects numerous communities, including cypress hebe, native coral broom and scree pea.

The New Zealand falcon/kārearea, geckos such as the Otago large gecko (Woodworthia sp.) and rare native fish, including roundhead galaxias (G. anomalus) and flathead galaxias (G. depressiceps) are found here.

NZ falcon/kārearea
Photo: K Lange

Scree pea
Photo: G Crowcroft

Coral broom
Photo: K McKinley

Buster Diggings
Photo: Amanda Ware

Olearia avicenniaefolia

Coral broom

Buster Diggings

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Olearia avicenniaefolia

Coral broom

Buster Diggings

Explore Oteake, a vast landscape of golden tussock and changing light. Oteake is 65,000 hectares of mountainous high country, tussock plateaus, scree slopes, shrubland and wetland. The distinctive flat-topped Hawkdun Range is the park’s centrepiece; often featured in painting, photography, poetry and prose.

Oteake Conservation Park and adjoining public conservation land covers large sections of the St Bathans, Ewe, Hawkdun, Ida and St Marys ranges and parts of the upper Manuherikia basin. The park offers spectacular 4WD opportunities and tramping, mountain biking, fishing, backcountry skiing, horse riding, photography and hunting opportunities. There are many significant gold mining sites to explore, including Buster Diggings and the Scandinavian Water Race.
Things to see and do

Oteake offers spectacular 4WD journeys and more . . .

All marked tracks are suitable for horse riding, mountain biking and walking (with the exception of Little Kye Burn Track, which is for walking only). There are many unmarked tracks in the park for those on foot, horse or mountain bike. These require good route-finding and backcountry skills.

Several access routes cross private land on registered easements. Please respect this by keeping to the formed tracks and leaving gates as you find them.

Walking and tramping

All tracks in the park are suitable for walking/tramping and many offer views, and picnic and swimming spots. Little Kye Burn Track is a great summer day walk along Kye Burn stream through native shrubland with a steady climb up to Buster Diggings. Picnic beside the scenic waterfalls and swim in one of the charming rock pools.

For more walking tracks, see the ‘Track descriptions’ section inside.

4WDrive and motorbike tracks

All vehicles are to stay on the formed marked tracks shown on the map. 4WD experience on steep terrain and in rough conditions is essential.

The park’s 4WD tracks are open to vehicles between Labour weekend and 30 April, but may be closed at any time as tracks are susceptible to damage.

Do not attempt routes you are unsure about. It may be difficult to reverse or pass other traffic. Visitors should be self reliant, with recovery equipment appropriate for the conditions and terrain.

Horse riding

Oteake is great for multi-day horse expeditions, with holding paddocks situated at some huts.

Fishing

There are a number of streams throughout Oteake that are suitable for fishing.

Ski touring/snow shoeing

There are great skiing opportunities along the Hawkdun, Ida, St Mary and St Bathans ranges.

Hunting

There is good hunting for deer and pigs in Oteake Conservation Park. See www.doc.govt.nz for a permit. Please stay within the park.

Dogs

Dogs are allowed in Oteake Conservation Park but must be kept under control at all times.

Places to stay

See map for hut locations

You can stay in one of the distinctive huts for a memorable overnight experience. Some are former mustering huts that have been relocated from the Roxburgh hydro dam or Otago Central Railway.

Huts

The park has eight huts and a basic campsite (see below). You will need to purchase a hut ticket before your stay.

- **Standard hut**: Mattresses, water supply and toilets are present. 1 hut ticket per night, children up to 10 years are free.
- **Basic hut**: Basic shelter with limited facilities. Free.

All huts have fireplaces; however, there are no trees in this tussock land. Take wood with you if you plan to use fireplaces.

Please note: Ida Railway and Tailings huts have a shared-use arrangement with concession holders grazing the Mt Ida Conservation Area. The Mt Ida syndicate may use these huts from 7 January to 30 April for mustering purposes. Please call DOC to check availability (see back cover for contact details).

Camping

The Homestead off Hawkdun Rd is the only campsite within Oteake Conservation Park. St Bathans Domain and Danseys Pass Recreation Reserve, off Kyeburn Diggings Rd, are nearby and provide good access into Oteake.

You can camp anywhere in Oteake Conservation Park. Choose your campsite carefully to minimise vegetation damage and follow the Environmental Care Code.

All campsites outside of the park area are Basic campsites. They can be used free of charge and have toilet facilities, and water is sourced from a nearby stream.

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Mountain biking

Oteake offers tracks for the beginner through to the adventurous. Some popular mountain bike tracks are:

**Half day**

Mt Ida Water Race Track  18 km (GRADE: Easy)
A great family trip with views and opportunities for smaller loops.

**Full day**

East/West Manuherikia Track Loop

*44 km from Hawkdun Runs Rd*
(31 km via Saddle Ridge Track. GRADE: advanced)

*41 km starting from Broken Hut Rd*
(GRADE: intermediate)

There are many river crossings on West Manuherikia, and a steady climb after Top Hut. Saddle Ridge track is steep; for an easier gradient but longer ride take Broken Hut Rd.

For more tracks suitable for mountain biking, and details on track grades, see the ‘Track descriptions’ section inside.
Track descriptions

Please note: While most tracks are suitable for tramping and horse riding, they are also 4WD tracks and cover vast country.

Access from Broken Hut Rd car park (660 m)

NZTopo50 maps CA15 CB15

East Manuherikia Track 19 km
Steady 5 km climb from the car park to Little Omarama Saddle (1357 m) and then a long descent to Hawkdun Runs Rd.

West Manuherikia Track 25 km
The track travels along the flat before a steady climb to the Omarama Saddle (9.5 km from the car park), providing an easier gradient than the East Manuherikia Track. The track descends steeply to the valley with numerous river crossings to Hawkdun Runs Rd.

Saddle Ridge Track 7 km
A rough and steep climb that links the East and West Manuherikia tracks with spectacular views of Aoraki/Mt Cook. Also accessed from Hawkdun Runs Rd.

Access from Otamatapaio Station car park

NZTopo50 map CA15

Otamatapaio Hut 20 km
Off SH83. There is no formed track for the first 8 km up the riverbed. After a bridge over the Otamatapaio River, the marked track begins and follows the river. Stay on the marked track. As a courtesy, please contact Bog Roy Station 03 438 9400, as their property is beside the river.

Access from Hawkdun Runs Rd

NZTopo50 maps CB15, CA15

Homestead Track 1.7 km
Short track that follows an old water race and starts at The Homestead campsite.

Manuherikia tracks

From Hawkdun Runs Rd, a 4WD track crosses open grassland for 3 km to a junction. From here you can go up either Manuherikia River East or West branch to the Omarama Saddle and into the Mackenzie country.

West Manuherikia Track 25 km
Rough track with many river crossings. It is a steady and scenic climb up to Omarama Saddle (1260 m) then down to Broken Hut Rd. See the extensive stone work on the Scandinavian Water Race that provided water to the gold mine at St Bathans.

East Manuherikia Track 19 km
Popular, well-formed track, climbs steadily to Little Omarama Saddle and down to Broken Hut Rd.

Mutton Creek Track 6 km
Links the lower sections of the West and East Manuherikia tracks. A shorter loop option for cyclists and trampers, this is a rough track with a very steep climb at both ends.

Saddle Ridge Track 7 km
A rough and steep climb that links the East and West Manuherikia tracks with spectacular views of Aoraki/Mt Cook. Also accessed from Hawkdun Runs Rd.

Berwen Track 4 km
The track crosses private farmland and links the East Manuherikia Track with the Hawkdun Range.

Track grades

Walking track—easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day.
Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy.
Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities.
Clearly sign posted. Stream and river crossings are bridged.
Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.

Tramping track—challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections.
Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required.

Mountain bike grades

Easy—mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

Intermediate—steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at track’s outer edge.

Advanced—a mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.
Access from Home Hills Runs Rd

NZTopo50 map CB15

Mt Ida Water Race Track 18 km
A well-formed track with a gentle gradient. The track can be accessed from three 4WD tracks: Shepherds Hut Creek Track, Hut Creek Track and Pierces Gorge.

Johnstones Creek Track 33 km
Recommended for experienced 4WDrivers. From Home Hills Runs Rd (720 m), the narrow, rough track climbs steeply onto the Hawkdun Range (1620 m). The track follows along the crest of the range, then follows Walking Spur with two steep climbs and a river-crossing before the Mt Buster and Hut Creek Track junction.

Access from Mt Buster Rd

NZTopo50 map CB16

Mt Buster Track 28 km
After crossing the Little Kye Burn (660 m), the well-formed track climbs steeply to the Buster Diggings (1200 m). The track then descends into Guffies Creek with numerous river crossings.

Hut Creek Hut Track 15 km
It is 8 km from the track junction to Hut Creek Hut. Beyond the hut, the track becomes rocky, steep and narrow. The track ends at the park boundary with no access to the Waitaki valley.

Little Kye Burn Track 5 km
Popular walking track (600 m climb) that travels up the Little Kye Burn through remnant tōtara and native shrubland to the spectacular Buster Diggings and Buster Hut. A great trip in summer, view the scenic waterfall and swim in the rock pools. From the Oteake Conservation Park entrance, travel along the flats to the start of the gorge and marked trail.

Access from Danseys Pass Rd

NZTopo50 map CB16

Mt Kyeburn Track 14 km
Recommended for experienced 4WDrivers. From Buster Diggings (1200 m), the track follows the ridge below Mt Kyeburn (1560 m) where the track becomes narrow and exposed, and drops steeply to Danseys Pass Rd.

Access from Awakino

Permission is required to drive up Awakino Skifield Road. Contact the DOC office in Twizel for access information.