Mountain biking in Mackenzie / Waitaki
SOUTH CANTERBURY / OTAGO

Grades of mountain bike tracks:

- **Grade 1**
  - Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

- **Grade 2**
  - Fairly flat, wide, smooth track or gravel road.

- **Grade 3**
  - Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

- **Grade 4**
  - A mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track’s outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

- **Grade 5**
  - Technically challenging. Giant climbs, narrow track and numerous hazards including dangerous drop-offs, sharp corners and difficult obstacles. Expect walking and possibly bike carrying.

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Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)

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General information

This brochure provides information on places where you can mountain bike on public land or public access easements managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). There are opportunities for all riding capabilities. Remember to follow the mountain bikers code (left) when biking.

Public access easements

Some of the following mountain bike rides travel along public access easements through private land. All easements are well marked with orange PVC marker poles.

Please:

- stay on the public easement track
- leave gates as you find them
- do not disturb stock—cycle slowly through livestock areas

What to take

The climate in Mackenzie and Waitaki Basins is traditionally very hot in summer and extremely cold in winter. New Zealand weather can change very rapidly so mountain bikers need to be prepared for a range of conditions. In addition to the items mentioned in the mountain bikers code, take sun block, sunglasses, and raincoat. Padded shorts and padded gloves will reduce the effects of jarring on dry, bumpy tracks. Wear a helmet if you are going backcountry and take a topographic map with a compass and GPS.

Te Araroa

Te Araroa is a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff. Parts of the trail are suitable for mountain biking. See www.teararoa.org.nz for more information.

Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

This new cycle trail goes from Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park to Oamaru. Parts of the trail travel through public conservation land and are profiled in this brochure. The trail from Aoraki/Mount Cook through to Omarama was officially opened in 2013. Go to www.alps2ocean.com for further details.
Lake Tekapo

The following two rides travel along river valleys north of Lake Tekapo. Both trips require a crossing of the Macaulay River which can be difficult to negotiate in periods of high rainfall and snowmelt. Mountain bikers can leave their car at the designated parking area at the end of Lilybank Road (prior to crossing Macaulay River).

Maps: Topo50 BW17, BX17

Macaulay valley to Macaulay Hut

Grade 2  Distance: 18 km one way, 200 m vertical

A 4WD track travels along the Macaulay riverbed and tussock flats to Macaulay Hut. This hut is run by the Mackenzie Alpine Trust and sleeps 14 people. Donations are appreciated.

Godley valley to Red Stag Hut

Grade 2  Distance: 25 km one way, 160 m vertical

A formed 4WD track travels along the eastern side of the Godley River valley. Follow a public road which is marked through Lilybank Station and then continue up the Godley valley on stony river flats. Red Stag Hut is run by the NZ Deer Stalkers Association ($5 p/p). Mountain bikers can continue up the Godley valley as far as Separation Stream, which is where the 4WD track finishes.
**Te Kahui Kaupeka Conservation Park – Richmond Trail**

**Grade 4  Distance: 13 km one way**

Richmond Trail is a fantastic mountain bike ride and is part of Te Araroa. The track starts at a signposted car park on Roundhill Ski Area road. Ride 3 km up the gravel road to the start of Richmond Trail which is well marked. The track meanders along an old glacial terrace with stunning views of the surrounding mountains and Lake Tekapo. The descent back down to Lilybank Road is technical but these sections can be walked. The actual Richmond Trail is 13 km long, however, for bikers to return to the car park it is a distance of approximately 26 km.

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**Cowans Hill**

**Grade 2  Distance: 3.2 km circuit**

This well-formed track is signposted off State Highway 8 on the outskirts of Tekapo, just past Lilybank Road. It is a short circuit track and is also well used by walkers.
Lake Pukaki area

**Tasman River Track**

**Grade 2  Distance: 10 km one way**

You reach this track from Braemar Mount Cook Station Road. This is a gravel road and you may encounter logging vehicles so drive carefully (stock may also be grazing the road verges). The track starts at Jollie River car park and finishes at Tasman Point near Chop Creek. Return the same way. Large glacial erratics (boulders) and rocky bluffs provide interest along with stunning views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana. This track is part of Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail.

**Braemar Road to Landslip Creek**

**Grade 2  Distance: 10 km one way**

Look out for the DOC sign on Braemar Road for the car parking area. Ride on the marked public access easement along the top of what is an ancient glacial terrace. This track leads to Landslip Creek and public conservation land. Return the same way.

Twizel area

**Pukaki Flats Conservation Area**

**Grade 2  Various options exist**

Pukaki Flats Conservation Area is 1.5 km north of Twizel township. It is an open, expansive block of hard tussock grasslands with sweeping views towards Aoraki/Mount Cook on a glorious day. This conservation area certainly provides a sense of the vastness of Mackenzie Basin! Both Te Araroa and Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail travel through here.

**Twizel River Trail**

**Grade 2  Distance: 12 km one way, 90 m vertical**

Twizel River Trail is a great ride for the whole family. It runs parallel to the Twizel River and provides plenty of shady rest stops and opportunities for swimming along the way. At the trail end, riders can either retrace the same route or, alternatively, follow a well-formed track beside Ohau River Road back to the start. Wash-outs can affect this track during periods of heavy rainfall.
Ruataniwha Conservation Park

Baikie Hut

Grade 2 Distance: 9 km one way, 200 m vertical

This is a short mountain bike ride from the Ruataniwha Conservation Park car park on Aoraki/Mount Cook highway (SH80). The track gradually climbs alongside the Twizel River to Baikie Hut (4 bunks) where bikers can picnic or stay overnight.

Dusky Trail

Grade 2 Distance: 23 km circuit

Dusky Trail ride is signposted on Glen Lyon Road. Bikers travel up beside Fraser Stream and then traverse along the tussock flats below Ben Ohau Range. A descent down Gladstone valley leads to a crossing of Twizel River. This crossing can be deep after rainfall so bikers need to take care. The track runs over stony ground beside the Twizel River and eventually emerges out to a car park area near Aoraki/Mount Cook highway (SH80).

Darts Bush Stream

Grade 2 Distance: 21 km circuit

This ride starts from a formed car park area off Glen Lyon Road (50 m past Dusky Trail entrance). This track travels through plantation forests and climbs up and over Pyramid Saddle. It then gradually descends beside Darts Bush Stream to the Fraser Stream/Darts Bush Stream junction. Bikers can either travel back to the start via Fraser Stream (shorter ride) or continue on the track that leads back to Pukaki Canal.
**Greta Track**

*Grade 4  Distance: 16 km circuit, 810 m vertical*

This track is marked off Glen Lyon Road on the eastern side of Lake Ohau. Drive carefully as this is a narrow gravel road and stock may be encountered. Greta Track is best ridden clockwise, starting at the car park beyond Greta Stream. It is a steady climb on an old farm track and you will need to cross Greta Stream several times. After traversing Ben Ohau/Ruataniwha Peak hang onto your handlebars as there is a steep descent down to Glen Lyon Road!

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**Dorcy Track to Flanagan Pass Trail**

*Grade 3  Distance: 9 km one way, 500 m vertical*

Look out for the 4WD track located before Dorcy Stream. Dorcy Track is a grunty uphill ride with a diagonal descent down Flanagan Pass Trail. Alternatively, ask someone to drive you up to the top and enjoy the ride back down!

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**Monument Hut**

*Grade 2  Distance: 9 km one way*

Monument Hut is in the Hopkins valley beyond Lake Ohau and a car park area is provided at Ram Hill. The first part of the track is well formed but it becomes progressively more rugged as you get closer to Monument Hut. This is a great day trip or alternatively you can stay overnight (hut fees apply — 1 hut ticket per person/night). It is possible to mountain bike further up the Hopkins valley to Red Hut or Elcho Hut but the biker will encounter many river crossings. River crossing and backcountry skills are required.

Maps: Topo50 BY14, BZ14
### Lake Ohau area

**Lake Ohau Track**  
Grade 2  Distance: 7 km one way

Lake Ohau Track is a great ride for everyone! Young families will enjoy this ride with plenty of places to stop beside the lake for a quick swim. Start at either Ohau River Weir or Lake Ohau Road. You will require transport if you elect to ride one way only. This track is part of Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail. The hut you pass beside the track is privately owned.

### Omarama area

**Wairepo Kettleholes**  
Grade 2  Distance: 3.5 km one way to the kettleholes

Entry to the Wairepo Kettleholes Conservation Area is 14 km along Quailburn Road and is well signposted. There is ample room for off-road parking. The track follows an access road which is a public access easement through private farmland. Mountain bikers will need to lift their bikes over a stile to gain access to the conservation area. From here it is a short distance to the kettleholes.

**Otamatakou Scenic Reserve**  
Grade 2  Distance: 5 km one way, 220 m vertical

This short ride starts off State Highway 83 opposite Lake Benmore. The track is a public access easement through private farmland and gradually climbs to the Otamataouk Scenic Reserve. It is possible to explore this area on foot, although there are no formed tracks within the reserve.

**Tarnbrae Track – Ruataniwha Conservation Park**  
Grade 3  Distance: 16 km one way, 320 m vertical

This picturesque ride traverses two conservation parks, finishing in Ahuriri Conservation Park. The track is part of Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail and travels on an ancient glacial terrace while passing through mountain beech forest. It is worth the short detour to explore the Quailburn Historic Site near the track finish on Quailburn Road.
Oteake Conservation Park

Manuherikia Track circuit

Grade 4  Distance: 20 km one way, 980 m vertical

At the end of Broken Hut Road there is a signposted car park for the Oteake Conservation Area. It is probably preferable to ride up West Manuherikia Track and then traverse along Saddle Ridge Track to meet up with the descent section down East Manuherikia Track back to the car park. It is a good uphill-cycling gradient on West Manuherikia Track but expect some bike-pushing sections on the climb up from Omarama Saddle on Saddle Ridge Track. The Manuherikia tracks are also popular 4WD tracks so mountain bikers need to watch out for vehicles.

There are numerous cycling options for the mountain biker in the Oteake Conservation Area with two huts on West Manuherikia Track. Riders can cycle the West-East Manuherikia Track circuit for a long mountain biketrip (44 km) or shorten this circuit with a ride across Mutton Creek Track. Mountain bikers also have the option of cycling all the way out to Hawkdun Runs Road and continuing on to St Bathans. There are many river crossings on these tracks, particularly West Manuherikia Track, on the Otago side of the range.

Maps: Topo50 CA15, CB15
Lindis Conservation Area

The Avon Burn and Melina Ridge Tracks can be reached from Birchwood Road in Ahuriri valley. Pavilion Peak Track is probably best ridden from SH8, finishing up in Ahuriri valley. Neither of these tracks are heavily marked, so carry a topographic map, compass and GPS.

Maps: Topo50 CA14

Pavilion Peak Track

Grade 5  Distance: 32 km one way, 1220 m vertical

This track is accessed from the SH8 car park and ends at the Avon Burn car park. It is a steady climb up Dromedary Hill and then a scenic and undulating traverse along the range to Pavilion Peak. You may need to push your bike up this peak in places and the initial descent off Pavilion Peak is steep and exposed. It is a pleasant ride down the Avon Burn track to Ahuriri valley.

Melina Ridge Track

Grade 5  Distance: 35 km one way

Melina Ridge Track is a long ride and starts from the Avon Burn and climbs up towards Mt Melina. The track negotiates a zigzag descent into Lindis River and continues on into Smiths Creek. Bikers will encounter many river crossings so care is required. The track finishes at State Highway 8 on the Otago side of Lindis Pass.

Avon Burn Track

Grade 2  Distance: 9 km one way, 200 m vertical

This ride starts from a car park approximately 11 km along Birchwood Road. The track is a public access easement through private farmland and traverses two short, steep terraces before crossing the Avon Burn. A well-formed track then passes beside the Avon Burn gorge and climbs to grassy flats near Tin Hut (private).
Ahuriri Conservation Park

Shamrock Hut

Grade 2  Distance: 5 km one way, 60 m vertical

This is an established track through tussock land to Shamrock Hut (two bunks). There are also plenty of opportunities for camping en route to Shamrock Hut or around the hut itself.

Map: Topo50 BZ14

Hagens Hut

Grade 2  Distance: 6 km one way from Shamrock Hut, 40 m vertical

Hagens Hut is accessible to mountain bikers, although reaching it does involve crossing the Ahuriri River. Descend the track from Shamrock Hut and cross Ahuriri River. The track is marked on the true left of Ahuriri Valley. Bikers then need to cross Ahuriri River again to reach Hagens Hut. The hut sleeps four people (1 hut ticket per person/night). Keen riders could continue on to Top Hut (two bunks) but the track is not as well formed so riders would find some sections easier to walk.

Maps: Topo50 BZ14

For your safety

River crossings
Rivers are subject to frequent floods, especially during spring and early summer, when their depth and width can change. Snow melt, usually in spring, will also raise river levels.

Communication
Cellphone coverage cannot be relied on in some of the backcountry areas. The use of satellite phones, mountain radios or personal locator beacons all provide increased personal safety.

Topographic maps
Carry the appropriate topographic map for your trip (along with compass and GPS). This brochure is a guide only and not recommended for navigation purposes.

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

Check, Clean, Dry
Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests.

Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

Further information

Department of Conservation
Twizel Te Manahuna Area Office
Wairepo Road
Twizel 7901
Phone: (03) 435 0802
Email: TwizelAO@doc.govt.nz

For further information about recreation activities and conservation visit: www.doc.govt.nz

Suggestions for corrections or improvements should be emailed to: recreation@doc.govt.nz
NEW ZEALAND environmental CARE CODE

- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)