

# Te Ara Pātaka

(Summit Walkway)

Banks Peninsula



## Hut fees per night

	Adult (18+ years)	Youth (5-17 years)	Child/infant (0-4 years)
Sign of the Packhorse Hut Sun-Thu	\$30	\$15	Free
Fri & Sat	\$35	\$17.50	Free
Camping	\$10	\$5	Free
Rod Donald Hut Sun-Thu	\$25	\$12.50	Free
Fri & Sat	\$35	\$17.50	Free

*Make sure you bring proof of your booking to give to Hut Warden or other users on request.*

Camping is permitted only by Sign of the Packhorse Hut. You need to pre-purchase camping tickets – there is a marked container next to the hut for the ticket stubs. There is no pre-booking for camping (it's 'first in, best served').

## Mountain biking on Te Ara Pātaka

Only some tracks are open to mountain biking. From Gebbies Pass, mountain bikes are permitted only as far as Sign of the Packhorse Hut (return the same way). From Port Levy saddle east the track is open for mountain biking, except through Montgomery Park Scenic Reserve. Bikes need to use the alternative exit route via Pettigrews Road. The short track down to Rod Donald Hut is not suitable for bikes – either leave them at the top, or be prepared to push them up and down the hut track. Biking allowed on Harakeke and Kōnini Tracks in Te Ahu Pātiki. Also Monument Track (South) but head east only upon reaching Te Ara Pātaka track.

## Public transport

Catch public bus #8 from central Christchurch to Lyttelton, and then the ferry to Diamond Harbour. Bus and ferry timetables are available on [www.metroinfo.co.nz](http://www.metroinfo.co.nz).

Akaroa French Connection provides services between Christchurch and Akaroa, and can stop or pick up at Hilltop Tavern on request. If you book to catch the bus at Hilltop, make sure you let them know to call at the Tavern. Be there 15 min after the bus departure time from Akaroa.

- For Akaroa French Connection book via [www.akaroabus.co.nz](http://www.akaroabus.co.nz) or phone 0800 800 575.

It is an excellent 2-day trip using public transport starting at Diamond Harbour jetty, staying overnight at Rod Donald Hut, and catching a shuttle from Hilltop Tavern back to Christchurch.

For track shuttles from Hilltop to Akaroa see <https://www.pohatu.co.nz/Specials/Shuttle.html>

## Further information

- Contact Department of Conservation for all enquiries about Te Ara Pātaka on +64 03 318 9211 or [arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)
- See the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust website for more information about the Trust. [www.rodDonaldtrust.co.nz](http://www.rodDonaldtrust.co.nz)
- Visit [www.bpwalks.co.nz](http://www.bpwalks.co.nz) for information on all Banks Peninsula walks.

Cover: Remnant tōtara make the distinctive landscape of Waipuna Saddle.  
Photo: Andrew Smythe

Text and images (unless otherwise credited): Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust

Interim Brochure with updated information issued Rod Donald Trust  
November 2024



## Te Ara Pātaka

### *A great introduction to tramping close to Christchurch*

Te Ara Pātaka (also known as Summit Walkway) is a 35 km route linking Gebbies Pass in the Lyttelton crater to Hilltop in the Akaroa crater. It follows a long high ridgeline that includes Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert, the highest point on Banks Peninsula. Allow 2 ½ days to walk the full length, staying in Sign of the Packhorse and Rod Donald Huts.

### *Preparation will make it a great experience*

Although the walkway is easily accessible the weather can change quickly, and it can be very cold and exposed on the tops. Make sure you are well equipped, with layered clothing and a water/wind-proof jacket. There is no drinking water on the way except at the huts and Mount Herbert Shelter – you must take water with you.



Trampers well equipped for poor weather. Photo: Suky Thompson

### *Working in partnership*

Various tracks connect to Te Ara Pātaka from valleys below, enabling a variety of day walks or shorter overnight tramps. This track and hut network is collectively managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust, Te Ahu Pātiki Charitable Trust, Orton Bradley Park and the Christchurch City Council, in cooperation with local landowners.

### *Crossing private farmland*

Many tracks cross private farmland, so keep on the marked tracks and respect the working operations on the farms. Respect stock and leave gates as you find them, taking extra care in large groups. Dogs are not permitted on any tracks, and mountain bikes are restricted to some tracks only. Firearms, motor vehicles or fires are also not permitted anywhere on this land.

### *Track closures*

- Some tracks west of Port Levy Saddle are closed for lambing – generally 8 August – 15 October. Check DOC website or [bpwalks.co.nz](http://bpwalks.co.nz) for details.
- Tracks east of Port Levy Saddle are open year round.

### *Getting there*

The easiest way to access Te Ara Pātaka is by private car, preferably by leaving a car at each end of the track. However, connecting tracks enable shorter loop walks, and public transport is available from Te Waipapa/ Diamond Harbour and Hilltop Tavern. If parking at Hilltop, leave your vehicle at the furthest end of the car park from the tavern itself.

You can also reach Te Ara Pātaka via several connecting tracks, including the Kaituna Valley Packhorse Hut Track, Mount Herbert Walkway, Orton Bradley Park and the Monument Track (both north and south).

The track can be picked up at Port Levy saddle, via Western Valley Road. Drive carefully: this unsealed road is winding, rough, steep and narrow. After heavy rain it may be passable only by 4WD vehicles.

### *Staying overnight*

Overnight stays are permitted at huts only. Currently camping outside the huts is permitted only at Sign of the Packhorse Hut. You must book to stay overnight at either or both of the huts before you arrive.

### *Sign of the Packhorse and Rod Donald Huts*

- Sign of the Packhorse Hut (DOC) and Rod Donald Hut (Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust) make an excellent introduction to overnight tramping for families and youth groups.
- Both these 9-bunk serviced huts must be pre-booked through the DOC website – [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).
- There are rain-fed water tanks and toilets at both huts for day walkers.
- If staying overnight take a cookstove, pots and pans, sleeping bag and toilet paper.

The huts are both above 450 m in altitude so it can get chilly at night, even in summer.



Rod Donald Hut. Photo: Suky Thompson

Each hut has a wood burner with firewood. This wood is only for use in the wood burner. No fires are permitted outside at any time.

*Note: Rod Donald Hut has a state-of-the-art, ventilation-improved pit toilet. Once composted, its contents can be returned to the bush. DO NOT put non-biodegradable items (such as nappies) in either toilet. Take these out with you.*



# Walking Te Ara Pātaka

The following description covers the walkway from Gebbies Pass to Hilltop, but other access/exit points are possible and noted where relevant.



Looking toward Akaroa Harbour from Montgomery Park Scenic Reserve.  
Photo: Andrew Smythe

## Gebbies Pass to Sign of the Packhorse Hut

**Time:** 2 hr

**Distance:** 5.8 km

*Track open year round*

*This section of track is maintained by the Christchurch City Council.*

**Christchurch**  
City Council



**Getting there:** The track starts near the crest of Gebbies Pass Road on the Lyttelton side, where there is a small car park.

This is one of three tracks to Sign of the Packhorse Hut. It is marked with orange-topped poles and signage.

From the car park, take the dirt road. Soon it crosses open paddocks with lovely views over Lyttelton Harbour/Whakaraupō. When you leave the paddocks and encounter the logging road for the second time, don't walk along it – make sure you cross over the road to enter the logged area. The track climbs through this area, eventually re-emerging into grass land, then skirts below the Remarkable Dykes volcanic rock formations. The track ends at the historic Sign of the Packhorse Hut.

## Kaituna Valley Packhorse Hut Track

**Time:** 2 hr

**Distance:** 4.1 km

*Track open year-round*

**Getting there:** Take SH75 to Kaituna Valley Road. Turn left into Parkinsons Road approximately 6 km up the valley. Park near the road end where the track starts. This offers much more secure parking than Gebbies Pass.

Sign of the Packhorse Hut can be accessed year-round via this track.

The track ambles through pasture and a logged area, crossing the valley stream several times. In the summer you can use stepping stones to cross, but be prepared to get wet feet if the stream is up after rain. The track climbs steadily through the bush, and then up a more open grassy slope with wonderful views back down the valley.



## Sign of the Packhorse Hut to Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert summit



**Time:** 3 hr

**Distance:** 6.5 km

*Track open year round*

Head east through Sign of the Packhorse Scenic Reserve through many young, regenerating lancewood trees. The track emerges from the reserve into open country and zig-zags steeply up the side of Mount Bradley, climbing 300 m. This is the toughest part of the track, so take a rest and admire the view of Lake Ellesmere (Te Waihora). After the last zig-zag the track heads east, skirting below the mountain's rocky massif through gorse, bush and regenerating scrub; you will have to pick over some rocky patches. Steep drop-off – take extreme care.

The track emerges at the fence line on the pass between Mt Bradley and Te Ahu Pātiki/ Mt Herbert, entering into Te Ahu Pātiki. Cross at the stile and carry straight on near the fence. You will soon join Te Ara Pātaka track, stay on the main track when Matai Track branches off to Orton Bradley Park. The Mt Herbert Shelter is a short distance along and has a toilet and water.

From the shelter, return to the Te Ara Pātaka track. Turn right after about 400 m, up a smaller track that leads through gorse to the Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert summit. If you miss this turnoff, there is another opportunity to reach the summit when the track from Te Waipapa/ Diamond Harbour joins.

There are stunning views from here on a good day. On a cloudy day it can be misty and confusing so watch closely for the track markers, which are closer together on this section.



Looking toward Lyttelton Harbour. Photo: Rangiora Tramping Club



## Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert summit to Port Levy saddle



**Time:** 2 hr 30 min

**Distance:** 5.7 km

*Track open year round*

From the summit of Te Ahu Pātiki /Mount Herbert, head south-east along the plateau through tussock grassland to reach the summit of 'Little Mount Herbert'. Take great care in misty weather to follow the orange markers along the 1-km plateau between the two summits. You may encounter cattle grazing along the way. Give them space as you walk.

From 'Little Mount Herbert', carry on south-east down a steep tussock slope, to pick up the marked farm track (punctuated by pine forest and old stands of remnant tōtara) to the Port Levy saddle car park on Western Valley Road.

Port Levy saddle is at the top of Western Valley Road. This steep, narrow gravel road connects Little River to Port Levy. It is not suitable for campervans or towing vehicles, and can be difficult for 2WD vehicles after heavy rain. Parking area here provides easy access to Rod Donald Hut or Te Ahu Pātiki /Mount Herbert (if doing the track in reverse).

## Port Levy saddle to Rod Donald Hut

**Time:** 50 min

**Distance:** 2.5 km



*Track open year round*

Cross Western Valley Road and follow the marked track to Waipuna Saddle. There is a beautiful old growth tōtara forest at Waipuna Saddle. This is on private land, but the landowner permits you to visit it. Please respect this very special place. Rod Donald Hut is down a side track and takes about 25 min to walk to from here. This section of the track is accessible by mountain bike, but bikes are best left at the top of the Rod Donald Hut track.

The Rod Donald Hut is on private land belonging to the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust and protected by a QEII National Trust covenant. As with Sign of the Packhorse Hut, bunks must be pre-booked through the DOC website, but day walkers are welcome to visit.

## Rod Donald Hut to Hilltop



**Time:** 6 hr

**Distance:** 14.3 km

*Track open year round*

From Rod Donald Hut, climb back up the access track to reach Waipuna Saddle. Then head east following the marked farm track through the tōtara graveyard, pasture and several DOC reserves.

Mountain bikers leave the main track briefly to bypass the narrow rocky track through Mount Fitzgerald, and take an easier farm track.

Soon after the Whatarangi Tōtara Scenic Reserve, the track diverges again. Walkers should head up to Montgomery Park Scenic Reserve and walk directly to Hilltop Tavern. The reserve track is steep and rocky, so take care and enjoy the beautiful forest including a giant tōtara, thought to be up to 2,000 years old.

The track emerges from the reserve onto Summit Road. Keep children close and take extreme care to look and listen for vehicles as you cross the road. Go down the steps and over the stile and walk across the paddock to Hilltop Tavern.

Mountain bikes are not permitted in Montgomery Park Scenic Reserve, so follow the farm track to Pettigrews Road; turn right at the end to reach the Summit Road, and right again to ride along the Summit Road to SH75 and then to Hilltop Tavern – about 3 km.



It takes six teenagers to link arms around the giant tōtara.  
Photo: Andrew Smythe

## Te Ara Pātaka or Summit Walkway?

Te Ara Pātaka, the name chosen by the four peninsula rūnanga (Wairewa, Ngāti Wheke, Ōnuku and Koukourarata), acknowledges the importance of the area as a food basket (pātaka) to their tupuna and the Māori name for Banks Peninsula, Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū. The name Summit Walkway acknowledges the vision of MP Harry Ell, the Summit Road Society and the many trampers who have walked and worked on these tracks over the last 100 years.

## Te Ahu Pātiki

Te Ahu Pātiki/Mt Herbert and Mt Bradley were purchased in 2021 to create Te Ahu Pātiki, with an independent charitable trust now guardians of the whenua.

Te Ahu Pātiki/Mt Herbert is the highest point on Banks Peninsula. The area is significant to Mana Whenua – please respect this. Looking north over Lyttelton crater is Christchurch, and views to Pegasus Bay and the Kaikoura mountains. West is Mount Bradley, the Canterbury plains and the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. South is Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora and Kaitorete Spit. The long, plateau of Te Ahu Pātiki/Mt Herbert stretches to the east for nearly 1 km, with the far end known as 'Little Mount Herbert'.

Both summits have communication towers, and it can be confusing to know which you are on! Facing Lyttelton Harbour, Te Ahu Pātiki/Mt Herbert is at the left end with Little Mount Herbert at the right.

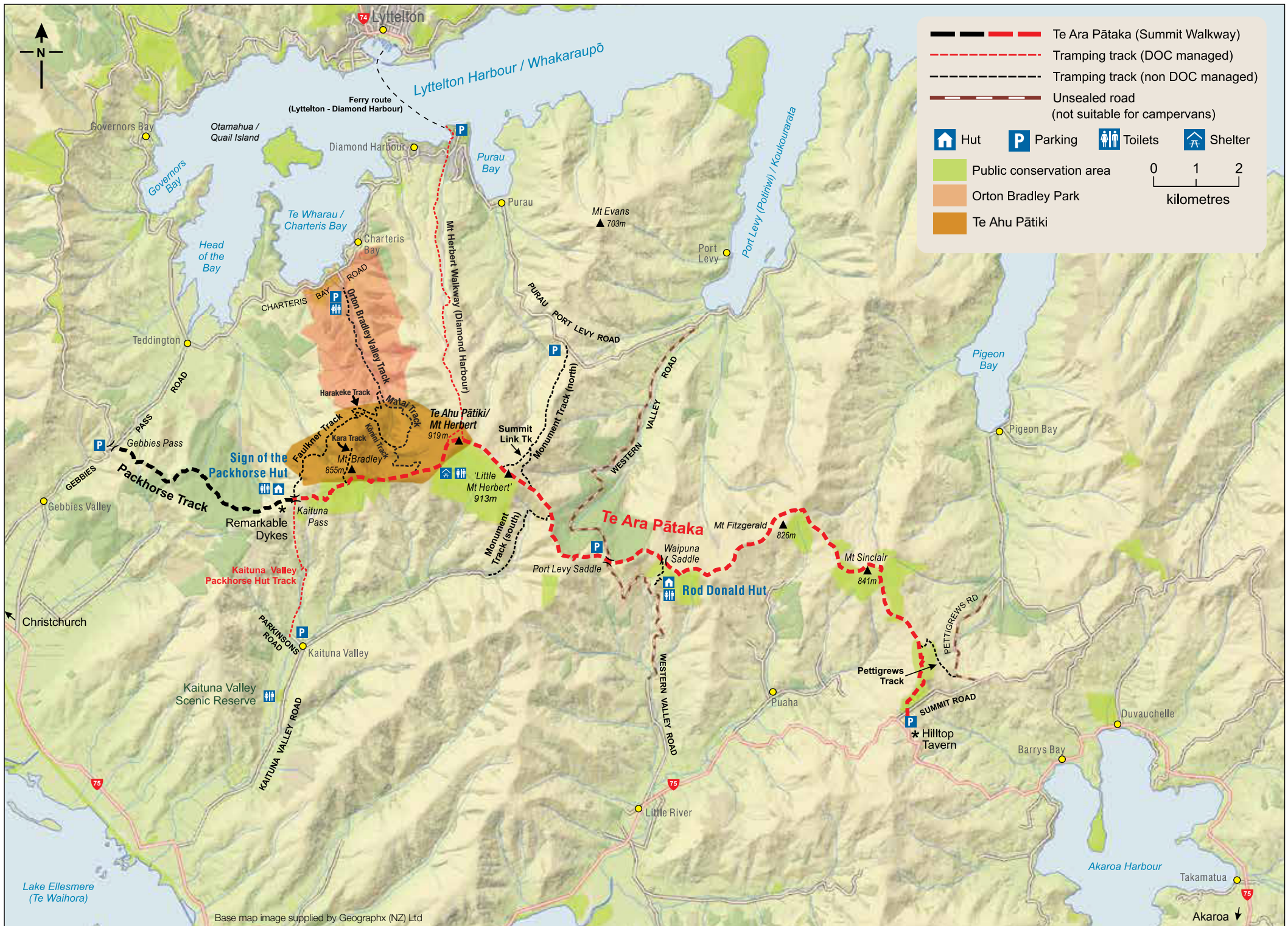
The top of Mt Bradley can be accessed from Karā Track branching off Te Ara Pātaka between Sign of the Packhorse Hut and Te Ahu Pātiki/Mt Herbert.

[www.teahupatiki.org](http://www.teahupatiki.org)



The crater rim. Photo: Anna Pearson









### Track grades

**Easy tramping track** – well formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking.



**Tramping track** – mostly unformed but with track directional markers, poles or cairns. Backcountry skills and experience required.

## Te Ara Pātaka – alternative track entrances and exits

There are many different tracks linking to Te Ara Pātaka, providing a range of opportunities for day walks or single overnight tramps. The following is a brief summary of tracks not already mentioned. For further details, visit Banks Peninsula Walks website: [bpwalks.co.nz](http://bpwalks.co.nz).

### Valley, Harakeke and Faulkner tracks

**Time:** 3 hr

**Distance:** 7.1 km

*Valley Track, Faulkner Track and Te Ahu Pātiki open year round. Shared use with bikes but biking **not** permitted on Faulkner Track.*

**Getting there:** Orton Bradley Park is at Charteris Bay on the southern side of Lyttelton Harbour. There is a small fee to enter the park, which has toilets, camping, a summer café and safe parking. Return to your vehicle in good time as the park gates are locked overnight. Park in the upper car park and follow the Valley Track straight ahead through forest and bush for about 2kms. Then climb up on the wide shared use Harakeke Track marked to Packhorse Hut.

After climbing for another 1.5km on the wide track, walkers have a choice. Go through the gate to stay on the easy gradient wide track or take the steep narrow track straight up the hill. Either way, you will cross the wide Kōnini Track, but to get to Sign of the Packhorse Hut continue heading around the north face of Mt Bradley facing the harbour, eventually passing through a lovely stand of bush. Soon after emerging from the bush, Faulkner Track crosses onto grazed private farmland, and picks through a rocky area, before arriving at Sign of the Packhorse Hut.

### Mount Herbert Walkway

This walkway links Orton Bradley Park to Diamond Harbour via the summit of Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert. It provides two excellent ways to join Te Ara Pātaka from Lyttelton Harbour.

**Time:** 4 hr up to Te Ahu Pātiki/Mount Herbert summit from either track

**Distance:** Diamond Harbour section 8.5 km. Orton Bradley section 7.8 km

**Getting there:** Diamond Harbour section – get to Diamond Harbour by ferry from Lyttelton, or drive around on the Lyttelton Harbour coastal road. The track starts at the jetty or you can join it from the coastal road (called Marine Drive in Diamond Harbour).

*May be closed 8 August to 15 October, check track status on DOC website or [bpwalks.co.nz](http://bpwalks.co.nz)*



No biking  
Faulkner  
Track



*Note: Most of the track is in open country and is very exposed – be prepared for all weather conditions. There is little water along the way so take plenty with you.*

### Orton Bradley Park loop

**Time:** 9–10 hr loop (including summit)

**Distance:** 20 km

An option for a loop track starting and finishing at Orton Bradley Park is to take Valley Track, Harakeke Track then Faulkner Track to Sign of the Packhorse, turn east along Te Ara Pātaka then descend down Matai Track. This makes an excellent 2-day tramp, with an overnight stay at Sign of the Packhorse Hut.

### Monument Track (north and south)

Monument Track links Purau saddle in the north to Kaituna Valley Road in the south, joining Te Ara Pātaka for around 500 m along the ridgeline.

### Monument Track (north) from Purau saddle car park to Te Ara Pātaka

**Time:** 1 hr 30 min

**Distance:** 4 km

*May be closed 8 August to 15 October, check [bpwalks.co.nz](http://bpwalks.co.nz)*

**Getting there:** Follow the Lyttelton Harbour coastal road through Diamond Harbour to Purau. Turn right on the Port Levy Road and park at the Purau saddle car park.

Walk along the road from the car park toward Port Levy, and cross over the stile beside the farm gate. Keep to the pole marked track around the edge of the paddock. Do not use the farm access road and keep well away from the cattle yards. After you cross through a small copse of eucalypt trees the markers lead to a farm track, ascending up to a flat saddle.

Once on the plateau, bear right to take the Summit Link Track to Little Mt Herbert.



## Your safety is your responsibility

Know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies

More information at  
[www.adventuresmart.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.nz)

## Monument Track (south) from Kaituna Valley to Te Ara Pātaka

**Time:** 1 hr 30 min

**Distance:** 2.7 km

*Track open year round*

**Getting there:** Take SH75 to Kaituna Valley Road. Monument Track starts at the end of Kaituna Valley Road. Park by the sign at the farm gate at the end of the road. Walk past the yellow farmhouse, and follow the marked track to join Te Ara Pātaka.

**Note:** The property to Te Ara Pātaka belongs to the Parrs, who live at the farm and recently retired it from grazing to facilitate native forest regeneration. It is now under a Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust covenant to protect it for the future.



## Kaituna Valley loop

**Time:** 10 hr

**Distance:** 23.5 km

*Track open year round*

**Getting there:** Take SH75 to Kaituna Valley Road. Parkinsons Road is approximately 6 km up the valley. Park near the road end where the Kaituna Valley to Packhorse Hut Track starts.

An option for a loop track is to take the Kaituna Valley Packhorse Hut Track to Te Ara Pātaka, and then the Monument Track (south) back to Kaituna Valley. The loop completes with a 6 km walk back down the quiet (and very pretty) Kaituna Valley Road to the starting point. This loop makes an excellent 1½-day tramp with a short first day, an overnight stay at Sign of the Packhorse Hut, and a longer second day.



- Plan ahead and prepare
- Keep to marked tracks and stay overnight at huts only
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- High fire danger – absolutely no fires
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



Tōtara forest remnants and skeleton trees. Photo: Janey Thomas



This giant tōtara in Montgomery Park Scenic Reserve could be up to 2,000 years old. Photo: Suky Thompson

## Banks Peninsula: a dramatically changed landscape

The astonishing tōtara graveyard bears witness to transformation of the pre-European landscape from thick forest to pastoral farmland. Timber milling began in the 1850s, soon after the arrival of pākehā pioneers. Great trees were felled and logs dragged by bullock teams to mills in the valleys below. Most of the milled timber was transported to Christchurch to build the early city. Fire was used extensively to clear the remaining brush and smaller trees, and the land was seeded with cocksfoot grass. Note the old tōtara fences still standing from those early pioneer farms, a tribute to the durability of this ancient timber.

Scenic reserves at Mount Fitzgerald, Mount Sinclair, Whatarangi and Montgomery Park protect remnants of old-growth native forest, with ancient remains showing the hardships of their exposure to fire and weather. There is a wealth of regeneration taking place in these reserves, thanks to the exclusion of grazing stock. Some of the subalpine species here include Hall's tōtara, tree fuchsia/kōtukutuku, broadleaf/kāpuka and dracophyllum.

Many private landowners are also protecting forest remnants and regenerating growth with conservation covenants.



Interim brochure issued Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust  
Updated information correct as of November 2024



Trampers near Mt Herbert shelter looking toward Whakaraupō/Lyttelton Harbour  
with Mt Bradley at left. Photo: Annette Woodford