

# Welcome

The Bendigo region has two reserves and four separate conservation areas on the western side of Central Otago's Dunstan Mountains.

## The Bendigo scenic and historic reserves

These adjoining reserves are a chance to explore a range of relics from Bendigo's hard rock quartz-mining days of the 19th century, including stamper battery sites, mining shafts and adits. They also feature a uniquely terraced band of kānuka and unequalled views of the Upper Clutha basin.

The main entrance is off SH8 via Loop Road. Follow the road up the hill to the Welshtown car park. Alternative access is available from the Rocky Point picnic area by Lake Dunstan, and via Thomson Gorge Road (4WD only). This 4WD road should not be attempted in winter or poor weather.



Quartz Reef Point tailings. Photo: © Stef Cotteret

OTAGO

# Discover the Bendigo area



## Further information

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**Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies**  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

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## Bendigo, Ardgour and Neinei i Kura Conservation areas

These three conservation areas straddle the ridgeline of the Dunstan Mountains on either side of Thomsons Saddle, offering panoramic views west to the Southern Alps/ Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, and east to the Otago hinterland. Alpine tussocklands dominate the tops, with olearia (tree daisy) and matagouri shrublands present at lower altitudes and around the creeks. Cloudy Peak (1,526 m) is the highest point and is often shrouded in cloud. The harsher conditions near the summit give the area a montane character and there are large expanses of dracophyllum shrublands, raoulia cushion fields and pebble pavements.

Vehicle access to the Bendigo and Ardgour Conservation Areas is available from the top of Thomson Gorge Road (4WD only – do not attempt in winter or poor weather). There is also walking access to the Bendigo Conservation Area off SH8, 5 km south of Bendigo Loop Road.

Neinei i Kura Conservation Area is accessible on foot through the Dry Creek Conservation Area.

## Dry Creek Conservation Area

This short section of Dry Creek features alluvial gravels surrounded by olearia and matagouri shrublands. Access from the Ardgour Road car park, off SH8 near Tarras.



Solway Hotel and bakery on far left.

## History

### Māori

There are no records of Māori history or artefacts from Bendigo. Thomsons Saddle was a route for Māori travelling from coastal Otago to Wanaka and the mountain passes that led to West Coast settlements.

### Farming

This area was part of the huge Morven Hills Station taken up by the McLean family in 1858. In 1910 it was broken into smaller stations, including Bendigo and Ardgour. Successive runholders battled the elements and rabbits; today, Bendigo is famed for high-quality fine wool and its vineyards.

### Gold mining

Gold, found here in 1862, brought an immediate influx of miners and prospectors clambering over the hills. The accessible alluvial gold petered out in 1865, but once gold-bearing quartz reefs were discovered, underground mines sprang up. By 1875, the Bendigo reef was said to be the richest and best defined in Otago.

Mining continued until 1943, when the government mining subsidy was withdrawn. Renewed interest since then has triggered activity in the 1980s and again early this century.

The historic reserve preserves the gold-mining relics of the area's hard-rock quartz mining history – a fascinating legacy that is visible today. There are mine shafts, tunnels, stone huts, stamper batteries, heavy machinery, water races, dams and pipelines.

### This is a historic reserve

All the material in the reserve is protected by law. Artefacts on this site have been security tagged with invisible marking. It is illegal to remove any object, and offenders will be prosecuted.



There are old, deep mining shafts throughout the area. Take extreme care, and supervise children closely.

## Flora

The high Dunstan Mountains contain diverse grasslands dominated by blue tussock (*Poa colensoi*), hard tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*), snow tussock (*Chionochloa rigida*), and cushion vegetation communities at higher altitudes.

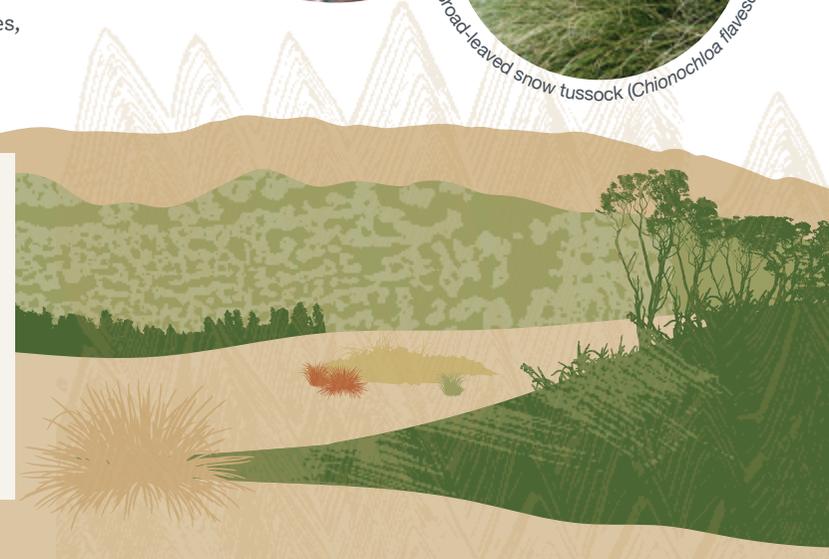
Lower in the Bendigo Scenic Reserve, the stand of kānuka (*Kunzea* sp.) is one of the few significant remnants of its type in Central Otago. This is regenerated kānuka, as the original stands were used by miners for building and firewood. Ground-cover vegetation in the reserve is sparse after more than 100 years of burning, mining and rabbit infestation. It grows short tussock, scabweed (*Raoulia australis*) and introduced weeds – mainly briar rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*).

Irrigation has made land-use possible in the region's dry climate. The conservation area is now bounded on its lower edge by internationally respected vineyards.

Kānuka flower (*Kunzea* sp.). Photo: Jeremy Rolfe



Broad-leaved snow tussock (*Chionochloa flavescens*). Photo: Morison



# Walking and tramping tracks

## Track grades



### Walking track

Gentle walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed, but some sections may be steep, rough or muddy.



### Tramping track

Mostly unformed but with directional markers, poles or cairns. Tramping/hiking boots required. Backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills, required.



### Grade 3 mountain biking (intermediate)

Track may be narrow and/or have poor traction and have steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles. There may be exposure at the track's outer edge.



### Grade 4 mountain biking (advanced)

Track may be narrow and/or have poor traction and have a mixture of long, steep climbs, and obstacles that are difficult to avoid or jump over. It is generally exposed at the track's outer edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

## 1 Dry Creek Track 4–6 hr, 17 km return



From the Ardgour Road car park, follow the marked track to the Dry Creek Conservation Area and continue along a dry creek bed through shrublands to the Neinei i kura Conservation Area.

## 2 Cloudy Peak Track 9–10 hr, 30 km return



From the Ardgour Road car park, follow the Dry Creek Track for 1 hour. The signposted Cloudy Peak Track crosses the creek bed then climbs to the Neinei i kura Conservation Area. From here an unmarked 4WD track leads to the Cloudy Peak summit, with views of the Upper Clutha plains and peaks towards St Bathans and Lindis Pass.



<b>P</b>	Car park	---	Walking track	□	Reserve
—	Sealed road	---	Tramping track	□	Conservation area
—	Unsealed road	- - -	4WD tracks		

**3 Come-in-Time Battery**  
10 min, 500 m return

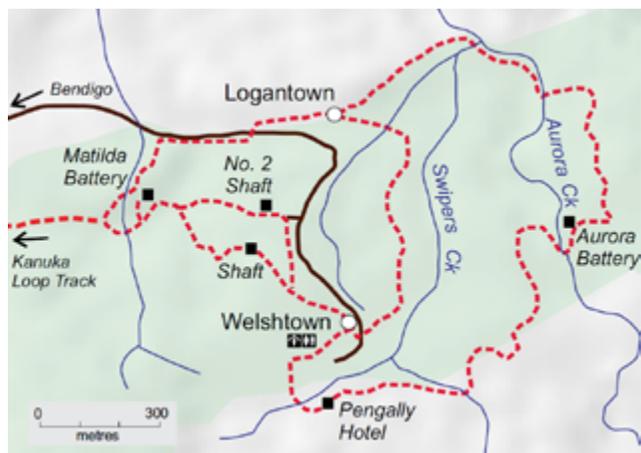


From Thomson Gorge Road, this short walk goes down to the mine entrances and battery that were part of the Come-in-Time claim, a virtually complete example of heavy gold-mining equipment.

**4 Aurora Track**  
1 hr 30 min, 4.5 km loop



From the Welshtown car park, the Aurora Track winds down through kānuka shrubland and across Aurora Creek to Logantown. There are remains of old stone huts along the way. Return via the Ridge Dray Track or up the road.



**5 Kānuka Loop Track**  
5 hr, 10 km loop



Park at Logantown, then walk 200 m back down to the start of the track. This follows the shorter Matilda Battery Track before branching off to the right at the crest of Spec Gully. After traversing open country and a stile, the track winds clockwise through the Bendigo Scenic Reserve. The typical Lower Dunstan Mountains landscape includes regenerated kānuka shrublands and impressive rocky crags, with great views over Lake Dunstan and the Upper Clutha valley.

**6 Mount Koinga Track**  
1 hr, 2 km return



Park at Rocky Point and carefully cross SH8 to the head of the trail. The track goes up a spur under the slopes of Mount Koinga to the boundary of Bendigo Scenic Reserve.

**7 Devils Creek Track**  
4–6 hr, 13 km return



This steep climb on an old 4WD track leads you up from SH8 to the boundary of Bendigo Conservation Area. There are good views of Lake Dunstan and the Pisa Range from the tops.

**8 Quartz Reef Point Walk**  
30 min, 2 km return



From the car park, cross the road and follow the marker poles to the right through private property. The gate into the historic reserve is at the top of the rise, and the track leads to a platform with views of the tailings. These pristine remains are the result of ground sluicing: channelling water to the head of a claim and flooding the work face. Large stones and rocks were removed and stacked in a herringbone pattern, and the washed material was then directed or shovelled to a sluice channel to separate the gold from the gravel.

## Other activities

The map shows where vehicle access is possible.



Hunting is by permit only – contact DOC’s Alexandra office.



No unauthorised drones on public conservation land. Drones can:

- interfere with helicopters for search and rescue, fire and operational needs
- cause noise, disturbing native birds and visitors.

## Your safety is your responsibility

The Central Otago climate can swing to either extreme in the course of a day. In winter the ranges are blanketed in snow, in contrast to the dry, hot summers.

Make sure you choose a track that suits your fitness and experience. Read the DOC publication ‘Planning a trip in the backcountry’ before you start:

[www.doc.govt.nz/planning-a-backcountry-trip](http://www.doc.govt.nz/planning-a-backcountry-trip)

This pamphlet is a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes. You should carry NZTopo50 maps CB13 and CB14 for the longer tracks in this region.

### Follow the Outdoor Safety Code

- Plan your trip.
- Tell someone your plans.
- Be aware of the weather.
- Know your limits.
- Take sufficient supplies.

For more information, visit: [www.adventuresmart.co.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.co.nz)

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



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