

# Oteake Conservation Park

Explore the ranges between Omarama, Saint Bathans and Naseby



## Nau mai, haere mai – welcome to Oteake Conservation Park

Explore and experience Oteake, a vast landscape of golden tussock and changing light.

Oteake Conservation Park is 67,000 ha 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 paintings, photography, poetry and prose.

The park and adjoining public conservation land cover 79,000 ha, including large sections of the Saint Bathans, Ewe, Hawkdun, Wether, Ida and Saint Marys Ranges and parts of the upper Manuherekia basin. The park offers spectacular opportunities for four-wheel drive (4WD) adventures, as well as tramping, mountain biking, fishing, backcountry skiing, horse riding, photography and hunting. There are many significant gold mining sites to explore, including Buster Diggings and several water races.

### Oteake highlights

- Experience the landscape of changing light with a 4WD along the tops via Mount Buster Rd to Johnstones Creek Track.
- Travel the backcountry tracks linking Saint Bathans with Omarama.
- Stay overnight in a high-country mustering hut.
- Enjoy unique native shrubland and waterfall views with a walk along the Little Kye Burn.
- Explore Buster Diggings, spectacular quartz gravel sculptures.
- Mountain bike the Ida Water Race Track with your family.



#### 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.



#### No unauthorised drones

An authorisation is required from the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) to use drones on public conservation land. To apply, visit [doc.govt.nz/drones](http://doc.govt.nz/drones).



#### No fires

Strictly no fires anywhere in Oteake Conservation Park, except for woodburners provided in huts.

## History

Kāi Tahu iwi believe that Oteake ('place of the ake') is named after the akeake, 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) for mahika kai (places for gathering food). Weka were hunted and plants gathered. Stone quarries in the upper Manuherekia are evidence of iwi activity.

Oteake's European history began in the 1850s, when pastoral leases were issued throughout the South Island's high country, creating large leaseholdings such as Hawkdun, Omarama, Otekaike and Morven Hills Stations. These were subdivided over time, and more recently have become Oteake Conservation Park.

The park shows evidence of gold mining, with remains of water races, prospecting pits, hut sites and alluvial mining sluicings. Buster Diggings, a spectacular sculptural landform created by alluvial gold mining, was once Aotearoa New Zealand's highest goldfield at 1,200 m.



Buster Diggings. Photo: Amanda Ware

## Plants and animals

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

Kārearea / New Zealand falcon, skinks, geckos, and rare native fishes like the Central Otago roundhead galaxias and Taieri flathead galaxias are also found here.



Coral broom. Photo: K McKinley



Manuherekia River alpine galaxias. Photo: Rod Morris



Kārearea. Photo: K Lange



Scree pea. Photo: G Crowcroft

## Mountain biking

Oteake offers tracks for everyone, from beginners to adventurous bikers, with half- and full-day options. Some popular mountain bike tracks include:

### Half day: Mount Ida Water Race Track

18 km

A great family trip with views and opportunities for smaller loops.



### Full day: East / West Manuherekia 4WD Track loop

50 km from Hawkdun Runs Rd, or 43 km via Saddle Ridge Track

43 km starting from Broken Hut Rd

There are many river crossings on the West Manuherekia 4WD Track, 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 mountain biking tracks and details on track grades, see the 'Track description' section overleaf.



East Manuherekia 4WD Track. Photo: Phil Oliver

## Things to see and do

Oteake offers spectacular walking and tramping tracks, 4WD journeys, and more.

All marked tracks are suitable for horse riding, mountain biking and walking (except Little Kyeburn Track, which is for walkers only). The many unmarked tracks in the park require good route-finding and backcountry skills.

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

### 4WD and motorbike tracks



The 4WD roads in the park are often damaged by weather events. Be prepared to turn around if conditions are unsuitable for your vehicle or challenging for your off-road driving skills.

Oteake is subject to weather extremes. In winter, this area is blanketed with snow, extremely cold and exposed.

To protect the fragile natural environment, all vehicles must stay on the formed marked tracks shown on the map. You must have experience driving 4WD vehicles on steep and rough terrain.

Do not attempt routes if you are unsure. It may be difficult to reverse or pass other traffic. Travel in groups. If winching is necessary, use another vehicle rather than a landscape feature.



Four-wheel driving at Oteake. Photo: Phil Tisch



Ida Railway Hut. Photo: Phil Tisch



Wire Yards Hut. Photo: DOC

## Other activities



Hunting is only allowed within the boundaries of the conservation park, where red deer, chamois and pigs are present. You must have a DOC hunting permit to carry firearms – visit [doc.govt.nz/hunting](http://doc.govt.nz/hunting).



There are brown trout in the Manuherekia River. You must have a fishing licence from Fish & Game New Zealand to fish – visit [fishandgame.org.nz](http://fishandgame.org.nz).



Dogs are not allowed on Otamatapaio Track. You may take your dog into the Oteake Conservation Area, but it must be confined to a vehicle while crossing any private farmland. If you are crossing farmland on foot to enter the conservation area, taking your dog is not an option. Your dog must be under your control at all times when off lead.



There are fantastic opportunities for multiday horse treks, and the huts have holding paddocks for horses.



There are ski touring / snow shoeing opportunities in winter.



Ski tour. Photo: R Wardle

## Places to stay

### Huts

There are 10 huts in the park. They all operate on a first come, first served basis. You must buy backcountry hut tickets or a Backcountry Hut Pass before your trip from a DOC visitor centre or approved outlet.



**Standard hut:** Mattresses, toilet, woodburner (bring your own wood) and water supply.  
Fee: one Standard hut ticket per person per night.



**Basic hut:** Basic shelter with limited facilities. You must be self-sufficient.  
Fee: free.

### Campsites

The Homestead off Hawkdun Runs Rd is the only campsite within the park. St Bathans Domain Campsite and Danseys Pass Campsite, off Kyeburn Diggings Rd, are nearby and provide good bases from which to explore Oteake.



**Basic campsite:** Toilets, water supply.  
Fee: free of charge.



Water at the huts is not treated or tested and may not be suitable for drinking, food preparation, tooth brushing or washing dishes. **Boil or treat water before use.**



**No fires** – the huts have woodburners.

## 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 New Zealand clean

Use toilets where provided. Take all rubbish with you.



### Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Government

### Further information

Tititea / Mount Aspiring National Park  
Visitor Centre

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Wānaka 9305

**PHONE:** +64 27 269 6871

**EMAIL:** [wanakavc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:wanakavc@doc.govt.nz)

[doc.govt.nz](http://doc.govt.nz)

Cover: 4WD tracks in Oteake. Photo: © Stef Cotteret  
Back: The ranges of Oteake Conservation Park at sunrise.  
Photo: Crystal Brindle

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit [doc.govt.nz](http://doc.govt.nz).

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New Zealand Government

**0800 DOC HOT**  
**362 468**

For safety hazards and  
conservation emergencies



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# Track descriptions

The map in this brochure is a guide only – you should carry 1:50,000 topographical maps: sheets NZTopo50 CA14, CA15, CA16, CB14, CB15, CB16 and CB17.

## Walking track grades

-  **Easy to intermediate walking track:** Mostly well-formed track; easy to moderate walking for up to a day.
-  **Advanced tramping track:** Mostly unformed track with steep, rough or muddy sections; has directional markers, poles or rock cairns.
-  **Expert route:** Unformed track suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.

## Mountain bike grades

-  **Grade 2 (easy):** Mostly flat, smooth track with some gentle climbs and easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.
-  **Grade 3 (intermediate):** Track has steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles and may be narrow and/or have poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outer edge.
-  **Grade 4 (advanced):** Track has a mixture of long, steep climbs and obstacles that are difficult to avoid or jump over. It is generally exposed at the outer edge and may be narrow and/or have poor traction. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.
-  **Grade 5 (expert):** Technically challenging, narrow track with giant climbs and numerous hazards, including dangerous drop-offs, sharp corners and difficult obstacles. Expect some walking and possibly bike carrying.

## All track times are one-way only.

Note: Broken Hut Rd access to the two-wheel drive (2WD) public car park crosses private land – keep to the marked track and do not drive on the farm airstrip at any time. This access may be closed temporarily when the airstrip is in use. This applies to Ewe Range Track and West and East Manuherehia 4WD Tracks.

- 1 Ewe Range Track**     
Broken Hut Rd car park to conservation park boundary: 3 hr, 6.5 km
- 2 Otamatapaio River easement**    
Backyards Rd 2WD car park to 4WD car park: 1 hr 30 min, 5 km  
4WD car park to Otamatapaio Hut:  3–4 hr, 10 km

This marked route through private land follows an old farm track along the Otamatapaio River, crossing the river as needed.

- 3 Saddle Ridge Track**    
Omarama Saddle to East Manuherehia 4WD Track: 3 hr, 7 km  

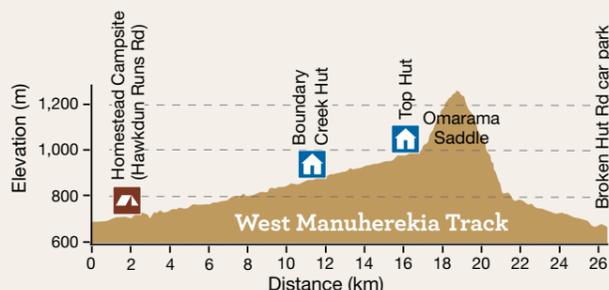
From the top of Omarama Saddle, a rough and steep climb to 1,700 m links the East and West Manuherehia 4WD Tracks, offering spectacular views of Aoraki/Mount Cook.

- 4 West Manuherehia 4WD Track**     
Broken Hut Rd to Top Hut: 4 hr, 11 km  
Top Hut to Boundary Creek Hut: 3 hr, 8.5 km  
Boundary Creek Hut to Hawkdun Runs Rd: 3 hr, 8.5 km

From Broken Hut Rd, the track travels across flat farmland before steadily climbing to the Omarama Saddle (1,270 m), providing an easier gradient than the East Manuherehia 4WD Track. The track then descends steeply to the valley and follows it down to Hawkdun Runs Rd. There are two huts along the way and numerous river crossings.

The West Manuherehia 4WD Track is not a through road for vehicles from 1 May to Labour Weekend – vehicles can drive to Boundary Creek Hut and Top Hut but not beyond. There is a locked gate on the Omarama side of the conservation area.

Note: Dogs must be strictly confined to a vehicle while crossing private property from either road end. Dogs are only allowed out of the vehicle within the boundaries of the conservation area.



- 5 East Manuherehia 4WD Track**     
Broken Hut Rd to Hawkdun Runs Rd: 8–10 hr, 22 km  

From the Broken Hut Rd car park, it is a steady 5 km climb to Little Omarama Saddle (1,357 m) and then a steep descent into Camp Creek. Follow the creek downstream to its confluence with the Manuherehia River East Branch and then down the valley to Hawkdun Runs Rd.

Note: Dogs must be strictly confined to a vehicle while crossing private property from either road end. Dogs are only allowed out of the vehicle within the boundaries of the conservation area.

- 6 Mutton Creek Track**     
West to East Manuherehia: 3 hr, 6 km  
- 7 Homestead Track**    
Homestead Campsite to West Manuherehia 4WD Track: 45 min, 1.7 km  

A short track along an old water race.

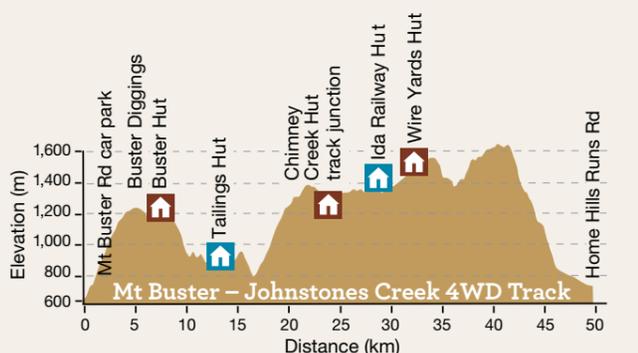
- 8 Mount Ida Water Race Track**    
Shepherds Hut Creek to Pierces Gorge: 4–5 hr, 18 km  

This well-formed track has a gentle gradient. It can be accessed from 4WD tracks at Shepherds Hut Creek, Hut Creek and Pierces Gorge.

- 9 Mount Buster to Johnstones Creek 4WD Track**     
Mt Buster Rd to Tailings Hut: 5–6 hr, 15 km    
Tailings Hut to Ida Railway Hut: 4–6 hr, 15 km  
Ida Railway Hut to Home Hills Runs Rd: 7–8 hr, 21 km

Carrying on from Mount Buster Rd, this well-formed track crosses the Little Kye Burn and climbs steeply to the Buster Diggings (1,200 m). The track then descends into Guffies Creek and follows it downstream to Tailings Hut. There are several creek crossings on the way. Past the hut, the track climbs out of Guffies Creek and then immediately drops down steeply into Boundary Creek, crossing it before climbing back up the other side to reach the wide tops leading to Ida Railway Hut. The track heads past Wire Yards Hut (basic emergency shelter) and climbs up Walking Spur before descending to Home Hills Runs Rd.

Note: Dogs must be strictly confined to a vehicle while crossing private property from either road end. Dogs are only allowed out of the vehicle within the boundaries of the conservation area.



- 10 Hut Creek Hut 4WD Track**     
Tailings Hut to Hut Creek Hut: 2–3 hr, 8 km  

An undulating 4WD track goes from Tailings Hut to Hut Creek Hut. Note that although it is possible to explore the track for another 7 km beyond the hut, it becomes rocky, steep and narrow and ends at the park boundary with no exit possible to the other side.

- 11 Little Kyeburn Track**    
Mount Buster Rd to Buster Hut: 2 hr, 5 km   

A popular tramping track that travels up the Little Kye Burn through remnant tōtara and native shrubland to the spectacular Buster Diggings and Buster Hut. From the conservation park entrance, travel 2 km along the flats to the start of the gorge and marked track.

- 12 Mount Kyeburn 4WD Track**    
Danseys Pass Rd to Buster Hut: 5–6 hr, 14 km  

This narrow, exposed track climbs steeply to Mount Kyeburn (1,560 m) and then follows the ridge down to Buster Hut.

Note: Dogs must be strictly confined to a vehicle while crossing private property from either road end. Dogs are only allowed out of the vehicle within the boundaries of the conservation area.

## Other access tracks

- 13 Berwen Track**      
1 hr 30 min – 2 hr, 5 km  
4–5 hr, 13.5 km from Hawkdun Runs Rd via East Manuherehia 4WD Track

This track crosses private farmland and links the East Manuherehia 4WD Track with the Hawkdun Range.

- 14 Otamatakou Track**     
1 hr 30 min – 2 hr, 5.5 km

This old vehicle track runs from SH83 to the boundary of Otamatapaio Scenic Reserve, which protects an area of remnant native vegetation. There is a marked easement route back along the Saint Cuthbert Range to the highway.

- 15 Baldy Knob Route**    
3–4 hr, 11.5 km

This route provides a tramping link from the top of Otamatapaio Scenic Reserve to the Hawkdun Range.

- 16 Dog Gully Route**     
2 hr, 5 km

From the final Otamatapaio Track 4WD car park, walk 6 km along the Otamatapaio Track until you reach the Dog Gully Route junction on the right. Follow Dog Gully Route for another 5 km to the conservation park boundary. This is a marked route.

- 17 Wether Range route**    
1 hr 30 min – 2 hr, 3 km

Accessed off SH8, follow the orange triangle route markers on the fenceline to the Killermont Conservation Area. This is a public easement through private land. There is no formed track here or within the conservation area.

- 18 Manuka Creek route**    
2–3 hr, 7 km

This marked route with no formed track passes from Shortcut Rd off SH8 to Killermont Conservation Area, providing access to the Wether Range.

## Staying safe at Oteake

 **Topographical maps are essential** for all backcountry trips.

 Flooding, snowfall and weather extremes can occur year round, **so take clothing for all conditions.**

 **Do not attempt to cross swollen rivers or streams.** Be aware of weather conditions in the catchment headwaters, and check fords before entry.

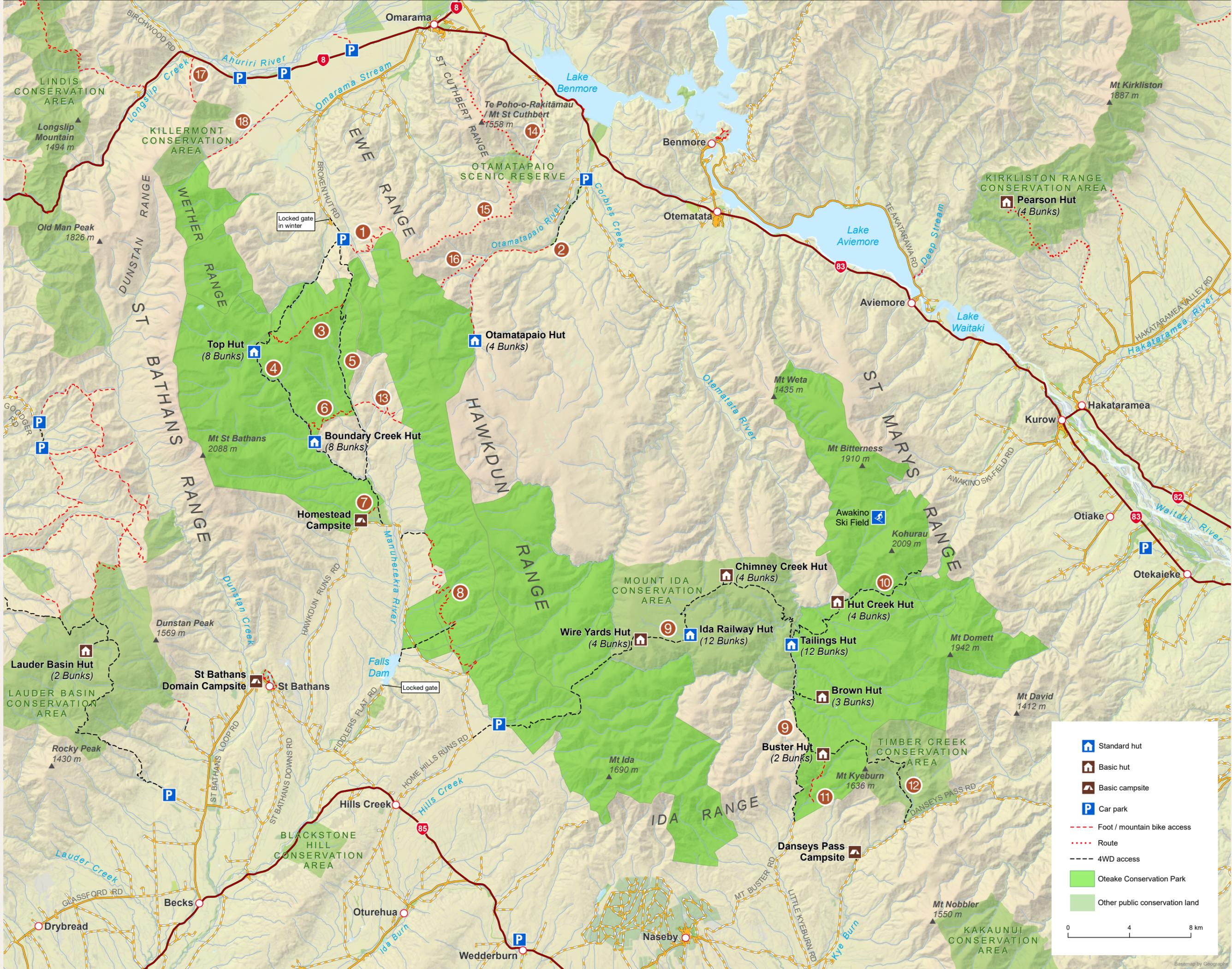
 **Avalanches can occur** from May to November – find out more at [doc.govt.nz/avalanche](http://doc.govt.nz/avalanche).

 **Mobile phone coverage is not reliable** in the park. We recommend that you carry a satellite phone, mountain radio or distress beacon.

 **Fire restrictions apply** to all public conservation land. Check with the local isite or DOC visitor centre for the current fire status.

## Before your trip:

-  Visit your local DOC office or [doc.govt.nz](http://doc.govt.nz) to make sure all huts and tracks are open.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Leave your intentions with someone you trust.



	Standard hut
	Basic hut
	Basic campsite
	Car park
	Foot / mountain bike access
	Route
	4WD access
	Oteake Conservation Park
	Other public conservation land

